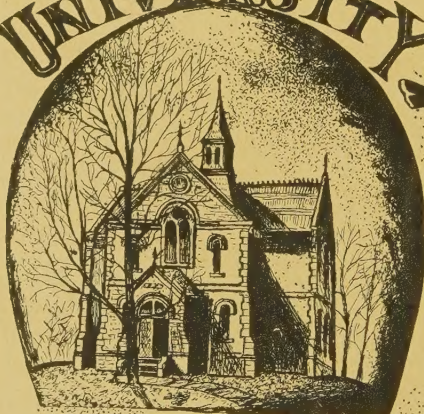




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**MY CAMPAIGN**



# MY CAMPAIGN

By

MAJOR GENERAL  
CHARLES VERE FERRERS TOWNSHEND  
K. C. B., D. S. C.

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# CONTENTS

CHAPTER

PAGE

## PART IV: KUT

XII.	THE DEFENCE OF KUT: FIRST PHASE . . . . .	3
XIII.	FIRST ATTEMPTS AT RELIEF . . . . .	51
XIV.	FURTHER ATTEMPTS AT RELIEF . . . . .	82
XV.	THE DEFENCE OF KUT: SECOND PHASE . . . . .	109
XVI.	THE DEFENCE OF KUT: THIRD PHASE . . . . .	155
XVII.	THE ATTACK ON EL HANNAH . . . . .	186
XVIII.	THE SURRENDER OF KUT . . . . .	232

## PART V: CONSTANTINOPLE

XIX.	A PRISONER OF WAR . . . . .	249
XX.	THE ARMISTICE WITH TURKEY . . . . .	276
XXI.	CONCLUSION . . . . .	298
APPENDIX TO PART FOUR . . . . .		313

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## MAPS

	PAGE
THE ENTRENCHED CAMP OF KUT . . . . .	3
DEFENSE OF KUT . . . . .	12



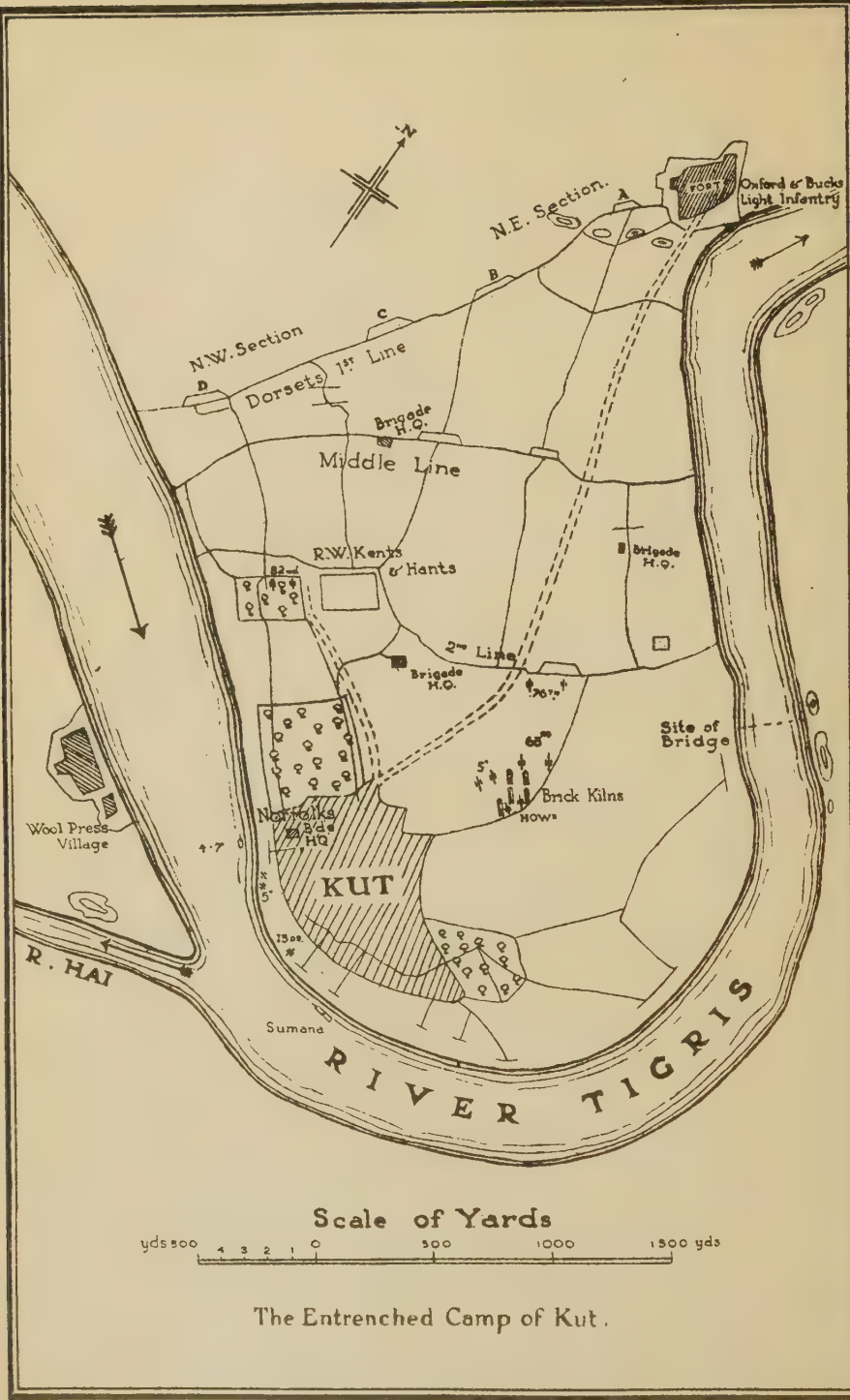
## **PART IV**

**KUT**











## CHAPTER XII

### THE DEFENCE OF KUT: FIRST PHASE

**I**T will have been seen that the idea in my mind during my retreat on Kut was to hold on to that place and not to retire beyond it. The reasons which actuated me I recapitulate as follows:—

(a) *Strategical*: By holding Kut, the junction of the Tigris and Hai Rivers (the latter connecting the Tigris and the Euphrates at the important point of Nasiriyeh, which is only some six marches from Basra), I blocked the advance of the 6th Turkish Army, as it was as dependent on water transport as the British were. So long as his steamers and lighters could not pass under my guns, so long should I save the whole of Mesopotamia from being overrun, for there were no troops to prevent Marshal Von der Goltz—who had now arrived with a large staff of German officers and taken command of the 6th Turkish Army—from assuming the offensive and driving the British from Mesopotamia.

(b) *Secondly*, besides holding up the tide of the Turkish counter-offensive at Kut, I should give time to Sir John Nixon to assemble and unite in security the scattered packets of reinforcements, which had now begun to arrive at Basra, into a solid mass at

Amarah and northwards. I also gave him liberty of action and manœuvre. Thus my division would in a sense act as a covering force for the concentration of the new troops—with the exception that my force would have to fight, and on principle a covering force, watching as much ground as is consistent with prudence, should never fight, but should fall back on the force it is covering, concentrating its extended detachments to the rear, as it retires. It should never get engaged and pinned down. A fatal example of a covering force standing its ground to fight was afforded by Mack at Ulm in 1805, but my case was quite a different one from that of Mack. After a severe battle I had been forced to retreat from sheer inability to keep the open field through lack of numbers. I should have to make Kut into an entrenched camp.

Now, all history is at hand to show that a force should not shut itself up in an entrenched camp unless the commander can reckon with certainty on approaching reinforcements, or unless it is close to the base and can easily be supported, as was the case with Wellington at Torres Vedras, where he was based on the part of Lisbon hard by, and had the support of the Fleet. In such a case the force is rested and not weakened by further retreat, while the enemy's operations may even be brought to a standstill for a time. Osman Pacha, entrenched at Plevna, was able to paralyse the Russian advance. By holding the neck of the bottle at Kut, the Turks could not use the Hai for transport to Nasiriyeh, as they could

well have done had they got possession of Kut. By leaving a minimum force to hold Kut, Von der Goltz might have directed the principal mass of his army on Nasiriyeh, held by General Brooking with a small mixed detachment of two or three Indian infantry battalions, which could have made no serious resistance to his large forces. By moving on Basra from Nasiriyeh he would have turned the British position on the Tigris, and thus compelled the evacuation of Mesopotamia. In addition, with such a strategic turning manœuvre he could always have retreated on Baghdad by the line of the Euphrates.

I determined to defend Kut as one defends a river line—by the manœuvre on a central position. I intended to use my entrenched camp as a pivot of manœuvre, when, by improvising a bridge and a fortified bridgehead, I should be able to throw the principal mass of my force on to either bank of the Tigris in an offensive against any isolated fraction of the enemy. In other words, I should manœuvre in battle just as if I were fighting a defensive-offensive battle.

Had my troops been able to work and get the bridge across the Tigris opposite the town of Kut, I should have been able to make an *active* defence.

Such dispositions would have made all the difference in the world. It would be possible for me to inflict a severe check, or even defeat, on the enemy, the *moral* of my troops would not be impaired, and if necessary I could abandon Kut at need and fall back by the right bank on the approach of the relieving force, who would stretch out a helping arm to me.

It was probable that Von der Goltz the strategist would leave a minimum force of approximately my own size to mask me, whilst with his Principal Mass he would pass round Kut to the northward and establish himself in the already existing defensive position of Essinn, astride the Tigris and some six miles down river, and there give battle to the force coming to my relief. I hoped that the Turks would try to take Kut by a *coup de main*, but it was more probable that Von der Goltz would not commit the error of attacking a fortified place, and he might think that Kut was a strong entrenched camp and be ignorant of its weakness, owing to the invisibility of modern trenches. As a matter of fact, not a single trench existed when I reached Kut. The sole defences consisted of a line of three or four block-houses suitable for savage warfare on the left bank, about 2,000 yards north of the town of Kut, and a mud-walled enclosure called a "fort" to the north-east of the river bank about 2,800 yards distant from the town, also only suitable for savage warfare. The old Turkish bridge of boats was some seven hundred yards further down stream. The famous block-houses had very quickly to be demolished, as they formed perfect ranging points for the enemy's guns.

I knew well the fate which in history is generally reserved for the force which deliberately shuts itself up in an entrenched camp or fortified place, as did Bazaine at Metz, Mack at Ulm, or Osman at Plevna. If the relieving army is unable to reach the besieged force, military history offers hardly any examples of

the self-deliverance of an army once invested. It was open to me to retire to the Essinn position, some six miles below Kut, the defences of which still existed, but were facing the reverse way to which I should want them, and embraced a front of six miles on the left bank (i.e., the front of two Army Corps) and three miles (the front of an Army Corps) on the right bank. This would have been an impossible extent of front for my exhausted 7,000 infantry—or 10,000 combatants of all ranks and units—including the garrison of one and a half battalions I found at Kut on my arrival. In any case, it was practically impossible for me to retire from Kut; so exhausted were my troops that they lay down and could do nothing but sleep and eat for two days! Under these conditions it was impossible for me to evacuate the large stores of provisions and ammunition to Essinn; and there was no other food for me to get this side of Amarah. Had I taken up my position at Essinn, I should have been enveloped and overwhelmed in a decisive battle in three or four days' time. Or the enemy might march straight to Sheikh Saad from Kut, and thus turn my position at Essinn. Finally, to finish off any other arguments on this subject: we could not have remained at Essinn on account of the food question—we should have been starved in a week.

On 4th December, the morning after I reached Kut, I sent the following telegram to the M.G.G.S. at Basra, where Sir John Nixon then was:

“I am making Kut into as strong an entrenched



camp as possible in the given time, the enemy's advanced guard being some ten miles distant and the main body five miles beyond that. As it is reported that Von der Goltz is at Baghdad now, in command of the Turkish Army of six divisions, I shall expect him to turn this place, leaving a force of observation at Kut to contain me. The relieving force will possibly have to fight a second battle of Essinn. I have shut myself up in Kut reckoning with certainty on being relieved by large forces now arriving at Basra. The state of extreme weariness and exhaustion of my men demand instant rest. Our being at Kut will also delay Von der Goltz's relieving force on the Amarah—Ali-al-Gharbi line. It is only violation of Economy of Force if you send up reinforcements in packets; Von der Goltz would take instant advantage of this. Eight hundred sick and wounded go down to-day."

Never have I seen anything like the exhaustion of the troops after we reached Kut. The great bulk of the Indian troops could not move at all, though I got the British to work on 4th December,<sup>1</sup> just as the Turkish advanced guard came into sight! Thus I was prevented from carrying out my intention of throwing a bridge across the Tigris, and so making my defence an offensive one. I remarked at the time to Evans, my Chief Staff Officer, "This will have a serious bearing on the result of the operation." It compelled my defence to be an absolutely passive one, and prevented all chance of breaking out of Kut,

<sup>1</sup> It was a real calamity for me, this exhaustion of the troops.

or of co-operating with the relief force on the right bank.

The Major-General, General Staff, had wired to G.O.C. Kut (Brigadier-General Rimington, R.E.) on 2nd December:

“Please tell Townshend that Army Commander must leave situation to him as to how far he falls back. But Army Commander’s intention is to concentrate reinforcements as far forward as possible.”

I was not given this telegram till 4th December at night! This was owing to an oversight or carelessness on the part of a Staff Officer. I only became aware of its existence by Captain Morland referring to it in conversation.

The Army Commander notified his approval of my action in standing fast at Kut-al-Amara in following telegram from Major-General, General Staff, of 3rd December, 1915:—

“The Army Commander is glad to hear of your decision, and is convinced that your troops will continue to show the same spirit in the defence as they have shown throughout your operations. Reinforcements will be pushed up to you with every possible speed.”

On this date also I issued a *communiqué* to the troops:—

“I intend to defend Kut-al-Amara and not to retire any further. Reinforcements are being sent at once from Basra to relieve us.

“The honour of our mother country and the Empire demands that we all work heart and soul in the defence of this place. We must dig in deep and dig in quickly, and then the enemy’s shells will do little damage. We have ample food and ammunition, but commanding officers must husband the ammunition and not throw it away uselessly.

“The way you have managed to retire some eighty or ninety miles under the very noses of the Turks is nothing short of splendid, and speaks eloquently for the courage and discipline of this force.”

I also sent a telegram in answer to a demand from the M.G.G.S. to say that I did not consider it advisable that I should send a mixed detachment down river to Sheikh Saad, as I could not feed it. I was about to be invested, the enemy being only ten miles distant. My troops were too wearied to move. The troops coming up river should supply such posts.

On 4th December my Field State showed 10,398 combatants, 1,505 of whom were the Cavalry Brigade, which I sent away on the morning of 6th December. I started the siege, therefore, with 8,893 combatants under my command. Of these 7,411 were infantry, a total which included the one and a half Indian battalions I had found at Kut on my arrival and the half battalion of West Kents picked up at Azizieh during the retirement. The 30th Brigade of the 12th Division was also still attached to my Division. The British battalions in particular were very weak, while the Divisional troops were fairly

numerous. I had 2,700 yards (one and a quarter miles) of front, on the north-west of the town, to defend. The generally accepted principle demands three to five men per running yard of defence, so that it will be seen that I had not enough men for the defence of my land front alone. This does not take into consideration the town of Kut with its Arab population, nor the Wool Press on the right bank of the river, for the defence of which I had to detach one battalion. Of ammunition I had roughly 800 rounds per rifle, and there was a fair quantity for the guns in the magazine. (See Appendix to Part IV for statements of strength and ammunition.)

On the first day of my arrival I organised the defence as follows:—

Northern Sector.—Major-General W. S. Delamain.  
—16th Brigade.

North-East Sector.—Brigadier-General F. A. Hoghton.—17th Brigade.

Southern Sector. (Including the town of Kut and garrison of the liquorice factory and Wool Press on the right bank opposite the town.)—Brigadier-General W. H. Hamilton.—18th Brigade.

General Reserve.—Major-General Sir Charles Melliss.—30th Brigade.

Divisional Artillery.—Concentrated principally at brick kilns.

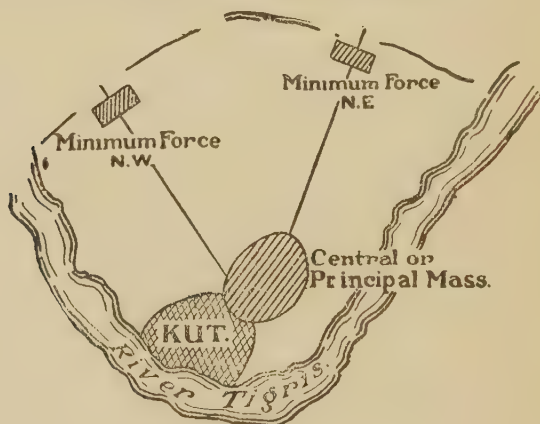
The defence consisted of three lines:—

1. Main Line of Defence. Along the line of the fort and existing blockhouses.
2. Middle Line of Defence. }
3. Second Line of Defence. }

The Divisional Engineer Commander was ordered to give me a list of all engineering stores in Kut as soon as possible, including what remained of bridging material after the retreat.

A list of all supplies had to be furnished to me, including those available in the town, which would be commandeered if necessary; also a list of the ammunition. I ordered ammunition and supplies to be stored in different magazines and distributed in various places.

The old Bridge of Boats was to be brought down and thrown across to the south of Kut Town; and a strong bridge-head of three redoubts installed on the right bank to protect the bridge and cover my débouché on to the right bank if necessary.





## DEFENCE OF KUT: FIRST PHASE 13

I gave orders for the Arabs in the town who were not householders to be turned out, with the exception of those the Military Governor of Kut might recommend to me. Twenty of the principal Arab inhabitants were handed over to me as hostages for the good behaviour of the rest. I arranged for a strong force of Military Police to be organised in the town; and also a Fire Brigade. All Transport carts not in actual use were to be parked in a place selected by the Assistant Quartermaster-General, and all drivers and followers not actually employed were put on to grinding grain in hand-mills.

Heads of Departments had to send in reports as to their wants and the means at hand for supplying them.

General Staff Officer, Divisional Engineer Commander, and Brigadier-General, Royal Artillery, were to study the weak parts of the lines of defence and endeavour to rectify them.

Provision of bomb-proof cover for houses had to be gone into by the Divisional Engineer Commander.

The civil population was to furnish labour for work in trenches, roads, etc.

Good buildings for hospitals had to be selected.

Telephones were to connect different sectors of the defence with Divisional Headquarters, and passages were to be made through the town as short cuts.

The town would be used as a Reduit or Keep, which could be defended step by step if necessary.

I gave the following principles, on which I should conduct the defence of Kut, to Colonel Evans, my



G.S.O., I., who, in addition to his many other excellent qualities, is a most able engineer officer and a man of great energy. I told him to work on them in conjunction with the Divisional Engineer Commander and the Brigadier-General commanding the artillery.

Each main avenue of approach was to be held by a force sufficiently strong to guarantee its security; whilst I kept a Central Mass or General Reserve in my hand, ready to reinforce any of the sectors held by minimum forces, in case the enemy delivered an assault on our entrenched camp. The guns of the defence were to be treated in the same way as the grouping of the infantry.

The factory on the right bank of the Tigris opposite Kut town was to be held by a battalion. And I was most particular to have three lines of defence.

The soil was soft and deep, and thus eminently favourable for digging; so the troops, wearied as they were, were able to dig in quickly. On the other hand, the soil equally favoured the Turks, who work so quickly and rapidly at entrenching and sapping as to surpass the mole. In a single night they will dig themselves in, out of sight. Never were they idle in this respect, by night or day. The Turk is *par excellence* a soldier of the defensive and a master of the art of trench warfare.

All the entrenchments and redoubts had to be dug and thrown up under fire. Had Kut been fortified when I arrived, I should have had time, not only to establish a proper bridge, but also to make a fortified

## DEFENCE OF KUT: FIRST PHASE 15

bridge-head on the right bank, and in this way to have conducted a far more offensive defence. As it was, I was forcedly pinned down to the passive defensive.

There were plenty of supplies:

For British Troops ..	60	days	
Indian Troops ..	60	"	
Fuel .. .. .	21	"	and 33 days
			across the
			river in
			the liquor-
			ice factory.
Grain .. .. .	30	"	
Fodder .. .. .	17	"	
Biscuit .. .. .	4	"	
Flour .. .. .	57	"	
Atta .. .. .	40	"	

In the town of Kut there was easily enough food for the population, some five or six thousand householders, to last about three months, but the Military Governor was authorized to buy up all grain.

I telegraphed to the M.G.G.S. that my scheme for the defence of Kut was to keep a Central Mass in my hand with a minimum force observing each possible avenue of approach. As soon as the enemy should discover his principal line of attack I should concentrate my Central Mass on that line, in order to support the particular force menaced. I was applying this principle also as regards my guns.

In a communication to commanding officers I

warned all officers to be guarded in their talk before servants, orderlies, etc., in mess and elsewhere. "Sentiments of a gloomy nature," I said, "calculated to depress, run quickly from mouth to mouth and do incalculable harm. I can best serve Government by delaying the enemy at this juncture and give time for our reinforcements to concentrate as far forward as Ali-al-Gharbi. So I decided to stop at Kut, and discontinue our retreat. The Army Commander has approved of this action. We have a hard time before us, but I have no doubt that we shall stand firm if all officers infuse a brave and manly spirit into their men, and I am confident as to the result. We must husband our ammunition carefully; we have 800 rounds per rifle, and roughly 600 rounds per gun, but with night attacks ammunition runs away like water. Therefore I ask Commanding Officers to be careful, and to impress the men with thrift in this direction."

In the early morning of 5th December, I received a telegram from the M.G.G.S., which had been despatched at midnight, 4-5th December, saying that alternatives to my plan had been carefully considered, and the Army Commander could only approve my proposal. Every effort was being made to relieve me as soon as possible, and it was hoped to do so within *two months*. He put forward the following points for my consideration:—In view of the possibility of my being invested at Kut, it would seem advisable to send back to Ali-al-Gharbi any mounted troops I could spare, transport, all shipping and gunboats, in order to facilitate the advance of the relief force and

to save mouths to feed. The main concentration would now take place at Amarah, with a covering force at Ali-al-Gharbi. The 28th Brigade would be concentrated there as soon as possible.

This delay of two months did not suit me. On 6th December I wired that relief within two months would mean the loss of the division, for the whole Turkish army of six divisions would be all round me long before then. It would be best in such a case, I thought, to preserve the division by retiring to Ali-al-Gharbi, and uniting with the covering force there. My retirement should be arranged as soon as possible. I could save most of the ammunition and bring away the heavy guns.

I pointed out that the loss of the division would be not only a dangerous blow to our prestige in Mesopotamia, but in India itself the effect would be most disastrous. I asked further if there were news of a Russian movement on Baghdad, as it would make all the difference in my situation.

If a Russian Force moved on Baghdad it would compel Von der Goltz to direct all his energies to its defence, and I should know that I was dealing at Kut with a hostile minimum force only, of my own strength or little more.

On 5th December, the Arab inhabitants of the town were searched for arms, and I resolved to send the Cavalry Brigade down to Ali-al-Gharbi to join the relief force, which was their natural *rôle*. I also ordered the boat-bridge to be constructed as rapidly as possible. By the night of 5th December, this

bridge, composed of the remains of our bridge-train and the old Turkish bridge of boats brought up river from its former site below the "Fort," had been thrown across the Tigris almost abreast of the brick kilns north-east of the town. I sent the Cavalry Brigade across at daylight on the 6th, accompanied by its mule and transport carts and "S" Battery, R.H.A., to march to Ali-al-Gharbi, *viâ* the right bank, General Roberts being in command. They had crossed by 11 a. m., and they disappeared in the direction of Sheikh Saad, followed by at least a thousand Arab horsemen, who were menacing their flank and rear.

On this date also I evacuated all shipping, gun-boats and all the spare transport I could send down river, in order to facilitate the advance of the relief force and to save mouths to feed at Kut. Sir Percy Cox, recalled by Sir John Nixon, accompanied this flotilla.

I also wired to Sir John Nixon the "names of those officers who have been of priceless value to me in the arduous operations included by the battle of Ctesiphon and the retreat to Kut: Generals Melliss, Delamain, Hamilton. Following had rendered good service:

Generals Houghton, Roberts and G. B. Smith, R.A.; Colonels Evans, Chitty, Grier, R.A., Stack; Major Hewitt, 14th Hussars. I wish to recommend for Victoria Cross Trench and Coventry, both Indian Cavalry. They took message through during night of 30th November-1st December to recall Melliss



## DEFENCE OF KUT: FIRST PHASE 19

to my assistance. Sub-Lieut. Wood, R.N.R., and Lieut. Tudway, R.N., I recommend for D.S.O.'s. Fine work has been done by Major Winsloe, R.E.; Goldfrapp, Indian Infantry; Campbell, R.E.; Wilson, 7th Gurkhas; Morland, Oxford Light Infantry."

I added that more staff and regiment names would be sent in soon; but the above were down in my notebook especially, and I thought that rewards would be greatly appreciated and would cheer up all ranks.

The following telegram from the Army Commander to me was received on 6th December: "I am delighted to send you this just received from Chief, India. Begins: 'Please convey to General Townshend and all under his command my appreciation of the skill and gallantry displayed in their admirably conducted retirement on Kut-al-Amara in face of greatly superior numbers.' Ends. Following private message from home says: 'All England and Paris are talking of your wonderful success and brilliant achievements.' And so they ought. Army Commander."

At the request of the Flight Commander, I allowed the aeroplanes to go down river to Ali-al-Gharbi. He pointed out that once we were invested the hostile guns would prevent the machines from getting off the ground, and would also destroy them when at rest. I required of him constant aerial observation of the enemy's movements down river—as I expected him to occupy his former position at Essinn—and also up river towards Azizieh, with regard to hostile reinforcements arriving from Baghdad. He said this



could be done; but up to 10th January only four visits were paid us by the aeroplanes from Ali-al-Gharbi, notwithstanding my repeated requests for reconnaissance up river from Kut. No doubt there were serious reasons why my requests were not complied with.

At 6 p. m. on 6th December, I received the following reply from the Army Commander to my telegram of the same date:

*"First point.* 'Relieved by the period of two months' was an outside limit, calculating to arrival of last reinforcements and the time that would elapse before a general forward movement could be made. It is hoped to quicken this up.

*"Second point.* So far as we know, you are not yet invested, nor is the river line cut. Younghusband with 28th Brigade and Cavalry Brigade should be established at Ali-al-Gharbi and Sheikh Saad within the next week and enable supplies to be pushed on to you.

*"Third point.* Retirement from Kut would open Shatt-al-Hai to Turks, and have a very bad effect, and does not at present seem to be demanded as a military necessity. Of the actual dispositions for occupation of Kut you are the best judge. So far the Turks have apparently made no movement. Do you think it possible they have shot their bolt for the time? They have only five steamers as against our three times that number and more coming. You have

some 10,000 against 12,000, and you have superiority of artillery.

*"Fourth point.* You speak of six divisions. Does this number include the 52nd, last reported to be in Baghdad, and 26th rumoured to be at or near Feluja, but not in any way confirmed? On the 5th inst. in your I.G.109 you spoke of only 3 divisions in front of you. You should send aeroplane reconnaissance to see what is going on at Badrah.

*"Fifth point.* Retirement from Kut should only be resorted to as last extremity. In any case the Essinn position seems indicated, not Ali-al-Gharbi, where you will be on top of Younghusband. Russians on 4th December were reported 3 marches from Hamadan and 23 marches from Baghdad, and Army Commander is wiring Chief of the General Staff to expedite their advance. It may be possible enemy wishes merely to contain you while concentrating on Nasiriyeh. Have you considered this? We are reinforcing Nasiriyeh at once to provide against this contingency.

*"Sixth point.* Remember that our large reinforcements, arriving daily, will have a good moral effect throughout Basra vilayet. Army Commander has asked for another Division and more heavy guns. As long as you remain at Kut enemy is in ignorance of your plan, and you are fulfilling duties of a detachment by holding up superior numbers.

*"Seventh point.* Your 169 G. received. The con-

centration at Sheikh Saad and Ali-al-Gharbi will be carried out. Taking all these points into consideration, Army Commander does not approve of your proposal to fall back on Ali-al-Gharbi."

Thus it was finally settled that I was to stand at Kut. Under the circumstances—an absolute promise of relief—it was sound strategy, as otherwise the whole of Mesopotamia would have been lost. I had overwhelming numbers on me; and, had I delivered a battle in the open, I *must* have been defeated.

To talk of the enemy being 12,000 against my 10,000 was erroneous. They had an *advanced guard* of 12,000 on me on 1st December; and this advanced guard had a main body behind it!

"To be on top of Younghusband" at Ali-al-Gharbi was also an expression I did not understand. To be united to him would have been a most desirable event, for in that case I might have given the Turks a sound beating in open battle, and have changed the situation.

Under the date of 6th December, I find the following comment in my diary on the resolution to stand at Kut:—

"Amongst other disadvantages, an entrenched camp can never guarantee even shelter from fire for a force occupying it, and is therefore no real rest to exhausted troops, as a fortress is. A hostile battery manages to get into some *pli de terrain* and, firing even at chance, is sufficient to cause confusion and alarm. In military history, the history of entrenched

camps is bound up with capitulations. Bazaine's army, for instance, the best in France, committed suicide by shutting itself up in Metz. If the entrenched camp of Metz had not existed, France would not have suffered the great disaster she did. The failure of the Russian army to arrive in time caused Mack to surrender at Ulm, and the failure of the fleet to relieve Cornwallis at Yorktown caused the British surrender at that place. Wellington maintained himself at Torres Vedras because Massèna never attacked him and because of the presence of the British Fleet.

"Therefore we must only retire into an entrenched camp when we can reckon with perfect certainty on an approaching reinforcement. The force shut up then enjoys the advantage of not being weakened by further retreat, and, as a rule, also brings the enemy's operations to a standstill for a time. Military history presents very few examples of the self-deliverance of an army once invested. Massèna's heroic defence of Genoa failed because the relieving army under Napoleon did not arrive in time to save him. And, as the English ships of war were blockading the port, Genoa was conquered by starvation."

Such was to be our own fate also at Kut. We were to be conquered by famine.

On 7th December, I sent a telegram in answer: "That Younghusband with the 28th Brigade and the Cavalry Brigade will be at Sheikh Saad and Ali-al-Gharbi within the next week is what I asked for in

my 169 G., and I am glad you can do it, as it altogether alters my situation here. All the reasons you give that I should remain at Kut were fully considered by me before I decided to shut myself up at Kut, knowing well by history the fate that generally awaits any force which shuts itself up in a fortress or entrenched camp. It was your statement that you hoped to relieve me within two months which made my situation critical. Your placing Younghusband's command and cavalry at Sheikh Saad altogether alters matters."

I thought that the speedy arrival of troops at Sheikh Saad, and the bazaar and Arab reports throughout Mesopotamia, always greatly exaggerated, of the arrival of troops and transports at Basra would at once cause the Turks to hesitate and halt in their counter-offensive. But I was quite mistaken, for I did not allow for the large number of German officers with them. What I did not grasp at the time was that German Staff officers were directing the operations all through, from and including the Battle of Ctesiphon. Indeed, Field-Marshal Von der Goltz, with a German Staff, directed the Turkish 6th Army away from Baghdad throughout all these latter operations.

Directly our cavalry were observed to leave Kut the Turks began their investment by a converging movement on both banks of the river, north and south of the Kut peninsula, of the principal mass of the hostile forces, whilst their besieging force moved in



extended order against my northern front as close to our trenches as our violent fire allowed them to do. Unable to proceed closer, they halted to dig themselves in and sap—and wonderful progress they made in a night. On our side we were digging in just as hard, for hardly any trenches yet existed worthy of the name. If the enemy had only attacked us in an offensive battle. . . . What an opportunity he lost! But Ctesiphon, and the rearguard action on 1st December had made him very prudent as regards coming to close quarters—which is the reason why he failed to destroy us on Christmas night, as will be seen.

In spite of our artillery fire, in a very few days they had formed a vast network of trenches and communications and covered ways around our northern front, entirely closing up the neck of the peninsula. At the same time a force estimated by me at a division moved on the right bank from west to east, crossing the Shatt-al-Hai some five miles to the south, and then approached Kut on its eastern flank, in order to attack our bridge and block our retreat down river by the right bank. As I have explained already, I had not had time enough to make redoubts to form a protective bridge-head.

In the next three or four days the enemy placed guns around us at all points of the compass, and on both banks of the river. The chief disadvantage of an entrenched camp like this, shaped like the great Indian peninsula, with water on all sides except the north, was that the fire of our guns went from the



centre to the circumference, and so was divergent and disseminated, whilst that of the enemy was directed from the circumference to the centre, and thus had maximum effect. This is not the only disadvantage of entrenched camps. They are merely figures, closed in all directions, composed of ordinary entrenchments, which give no such shelter from gunfire as a fortress does. Moreover, an entrenched camp is unlike a fortress, in that you cannot, without running the gravest risk, denude a front in order to make a sortie in strength. Thus they do not even assure real rest and repose to the troops installed in their perimeter, while the operation of making a sortie is a most dangerous one.

The departure of the Cavalry Brigade had now reduced my combatants to 8,990, of whom the infantry mustered some 7,000. The want of British officers, owing to heavy casualties in Indian units at the Battle of Ctesiphon, was a most dangerous and serious factor in the defence of Kut. I can say without exaggeration that this loss in British regular officers in Indian units endangered the defence, for the few Indian Army Reserve British officers were civilians, and, though full of zeal, were untrained, and thus could not keep the men in hand so much as was desirable. The units had also lost heavily in Indian officers; and the Indian battalions as a result had practically become armed bands (with discipline, it is true) from want of British officers. Had the system of the Indian Service embodied a full complement of British officers on the scale of a British line regiment,

as in the days of the East India Company, I should never have had the least doubt in my mind as to the result of any attack whatever. In our rearguard action on 1st December, General Delamain had actually been forced to put British soldiers of the Dorset regiment into the ranks of the Indian units of his brigade, in order to preserve steadiness in retreat.

The enemy's guns shelled the fort violently the whole afternoon of 7th December, and there were thirty casualties, while the walls crumbled under the shells. The fort had evidently been designed only for protection of Kut against Arab tribesmen. On this date a letter was sent by Nureddin, asking me to avoid useless bloodshed by laying down my arms. He pointed out that my troops were enfeebled and weak in numbers, and it only needed a serious effort on the part of his numerically superior forces to overwhelm us. He complained also that the occupation of the town of Kut, thus exposing peaceful inhabitants to the horrors of war, was against the laws of civilised warfare.

I sent a reply that I had no answer to give to such an absurd demand as the laying down of my arms. But I thanked him for his courtesy in conforming to the usual custom in war in summoning the commandant or governor of a town to surrender before starting bombardment of it. I observed that he was curiously and extraordinarily in error in imagining that the defence of a town was against the laws of civilised war; that there was no battle of any consequence in Europe and no siege which did not include the attack or de-

fence of a town or village; and that his friends the Germans not only always occupied towns and villages, but did so in a manner peculiar to themselves.

My former experience of sieges had shown me the great advantages of keeping up the spirits of the troops by means of *communiqués* instilling belief in the arrival of succour from without. I again issued a *communiqué* to the men: that we should now probably be bombarded, but that the effect of heavy guns is much more moral than actual. Stray mules are knocked over, a cart or the corner of a house are destroyed; but let the men remain quietly in their dug-outs, and they are not touched. They must keep quiet and reserve their ammunition, both rifle and gun, for the hostile infantry. It was only an attack of infantry which I reckoned as serious. I told them that the Army Commander had promised to have reinforcements concentrating at Sheikh Saad within the next week.

The following telegram I sent to the M.G.G.S. on 7th December shows that I was very anxious regarding the efficiency of the troops, who were now suffering the reaction after the hard-fought Battle of Ctesiphon, the exhausting retreat, and the depression consequent on being locked up in an entrenched camp. "We have now some 8,990 combatants, of whom infantry number only 7,000; the British battalions (Norfolks, Dorsets, Oxford Light Infantry and half-battalion of West Kents) are practically the strength of double companies in peace time. The want of British officers in some of the Indian bat-

talions is most serious. For example, the 110th have one British officer; the list of sick and weakly men unable to march is a very depressing one.

"I have ample ammunition, roughly 800 rounds per rifle; shrapnel, 590 rounds per gun; lyddite, 208 per big gun; the A.Q.M.G. will wire all details. Although I urgently require aeroplanes they must leave for Ali-al-Gharbi this morning—reason, no spare parts. The aeroplane barge was lost in the retirement to Kut, and the aeroplanes will be destroyed by shell fire if they remain here."

On 8th December I heard the news that the Cavalry Brigade had arrived safely at Ali-al-Gharbi on the afternoon of that day, and that General Aylmer was to leave Basra on 9th December to command the troops on the Tigris line, which were to be formed into an Army Corps. The Cavalry Brigade had been harassed after starting from Kut by Rabiah Arabs and Ajil with 800 horsemen. Practically every Arab was hostile till they reached Beitomeid, but, beyond using the rifle at long range, they were as usual much too cowardly to make any real attack.

On 9th December we were severely shelled from all points of the compass; the detachment on the right bank covering the bridge-head, which had not been entrenched as yet, having left their positions on the sand-hills to drive the enemy's riflemen off some adjacent sand-hills, were counter-attacked and driven across the bridge. This detachment consisted of a double company of the 67th Punjabis under Captain Gribbon, who was shot in three places and left behind.



It was impossible to carry him away owing to the heavy fire. It was ascertained later that he was killed. The enemy on the right bank then installed themselves close to the water's edge, and, utilising the banks and water-cuts, fired on our bridge of boats. As there was a danger of the enemy forcing his way across the bridge in the night I ordered it to be destroyed under cover of darkness by explosives. It was successfully demolished during the night of 9th—10th December by Lieutenant Sweet, of the 7th Gurkhas, and Lieut. Mathews, R.E., with a party of volunteers, consisting of Gurkhas and Sappers and Miners.

This was a most gallant affair, the two officers going to the enemy's side of the river, across the bridge, which had sagged in places under the swift-running current owing to waterlogged pontoons, and laying the saucisson, while the others stood by to cut the anchor cables. With the explosion the bridge broke up. The enemy were for some time too dazed to open fire and the whole party escaped. I recommended the two British officers for the Victoria Cross and the men for the Indian Order of Merit.<sup>2</sup>

On 10th December General Aylmer announced his arrival from India to command the relief force in a

<sup>2</sup> Lieutenants Mathews and Sweet were awarded the D.S.O. in the London Gazette of the 19th October, 1916. I am convinced that never has the V.C. been more fairly and squarely won than in the case of these two young officers. They volunteered for what appeared certain death, for the enemy had this bridge at the mercy of their rifles at 300 to 400 yards' range and were firing down on to it. They waited all day in cold blood to carry out the operation under cover of darkness—a very different proceeding from doing it on the impulse of the moment.



telegram of the same date: "Have assumed command Tigris line. Have utmost confidence in defender of Chitral and his gallant troops to keep flag flying till we can relieve them. Heartiest congratulations on brilliant deeds of yourself and your command."

To this I replied: "Thanks from Sixth Division and troops attached for your inspiring message. Your confidence shall not be misplaced. Grateful thanks from myself for your message. Am proud to serve under you."

The Secretary of State wired on 10th December, asking for details of the entrenched position at Kut, with reference to the Tigris, the Hai, Kut town, and Essinn. He enquired whether I had a boat-bridge commanding both banks. I replied, on the same day that my entrenched camp was in the peninsula of land formed by the loop of the Tigris on which the town of Kut stands, at the most southerly point of the said peninsula.

"From this southerly point, the entrenched camp extends to the northward some 3,200 yards; its breadth is roughly 1,700 yards. We are invested on all sides except the west as yet. The boat-bridge, which I had brought from its old site outside the sphere of my entrenched camp and placed east of Kut town, had to be demolished last night by volunteers with explosives—a most gallant affair, as the enemy had made a determined attack on the bridge during the day, driving in the bridge-head detachment and occupying the bank at the bridge-head. I

have no means of gaining the right bank now except by the gunboat *Sumana* and a barge. We are heavily shelled by enfilade fire all day. I had 199 casualties yesterday. I occupy the liquorice factory and the village on the right bank with two battalions. Essinn is seven miles north-east as the crow flies."

Government at home were evidently anxious about the situation, for another telegram was received by me on 10th December, asking for the following information to send the War Committee:

- "(1) Have Turks heavy guns superior to ours?
- (2) What barges have been captured or destroyed, and what did they contain?
- (3) What is your present view of the situation? How long do you anticipate that you can hold out? Health and spirit of troops and anything else you may wish to bring forward for information of War Committee.
- (4) How are you employing the 4.7 guns and where is the *Shushan*?"

I replied:—

"(1) The Turks have four 10.5 centimetre guns, which are certainly superior to our five-inch guns in rapidity and range.

- "(2) No. 1 coal and oil barge, nearly empty.  
No. 28 barge, containing naval ammunition and tents.  
No. 4 barge, supply and transport stores.  
No. 11 barge, supply and transport stores,

sick men unable to march and a few wounded; 220 boxes of S.A. ammunition and 445 rounds for 13-pounder gun.

No. 31 barge, aviation stores.

Two L class launches.

All bridge train pontoons and several dunnocks, sunk by rifle fire from the bank.

“(3) My view of the situation is that our strategic offensive has received the usual check, common enough in history when the offensive has not got sufficient troops nor a constant flow of reinforcements to keep the offensive up to its high-water mark (Hannibal, Charles XII, and Napoleon all failed for the same reason); whilst the defender, retiring more and more into the interior, gains time for above factors to weaken the offensive, and draws nearer supplies and reinforcements not available for him at the outset of the struggle.

“This situation can be quickly remedied by rapid concentration of forces and relief of my beleaguered force, uniting all forces at Kut for final advance on Baghdad: example, Wellington’s resumption of the offensive after his retreat from Burgos to the Portuguese frontier.

“The fighting value of my troops has naturally much decreased since Ctesiphon, though discipline maintains. I am very anxious as to the result if enemy makes a determined onslaught with very superior numbers. We are constantly shelled all day and I am very anxious to be relieved in, say, ten or fifteen days. I am doing all I can by appealing to

the troops on the ground of their good name and patriotism. I have over 800 sick, and am convinced that there should not be more than 300 at the outside.<sup>3</sup> When we are relieved these troops require rest on the line of communications.

“(4) My 4.7 guns are in horse-boats, but I am endeavouring to mount them on land.”

On 10th December the enemy delivered a heavy attack. They pressed us severely all day along the northern front, and were only kept from closing on us by our heavy rifle fire. They exhibited the same reluctance to assault as they had at Ctesiphon. The enemy lost heavily, and we could see many dead bodies lying thickly in the open. They pressed us very severely. The fort especially was heavily attacked, and severe pressure was brought to bear on my northern front, where the Turks were entrenching and sapping close up to our trenches, and were only contained by a tremendous rifle fire from our people. I was very anxious, for a sudden assault in great numbers would have carried all before it, considering the paucity of British Officers with the Indian troops, and their *moral* at this time. I was also worried by the great expenditure of rifle ammunition. In apparent anger at the repulse, we were heavily

<sup>3</sup> There was, I regret to say, a considerable amount of malingering among the Indian troops, whose tails were decidedly down. Hence my anxiety should an assault take place. I draw special attention to this paragraph, as this was the greatest source of anxiety to me throughout the siege. It was the reason that prompted me to ask that my relief should be expedited.

bombarded on 11th December, our casualties being 202 killed and wounded.

The attack was repeated on 12th December, at 6.30 p. m. For nearly an hour a tremendous rifle fire was answered by our troops in the first line along the northern front. The enemy did not push the attack home, and the fire ceased at about 7.30 p. m. We ascertained later from prisoners and deserters that the Turks lost heavily—fully 2,000, it was said. They were thickly massed for attack just before dusk, but their hearts failed them again. Our own casualties were 88 killed and wounded.

Our post at the liquorice factory and village on the right bank was also the object of a very heavy rifle-fire fight, but again the enemy did not push it home, not leaving their trenches. These heavy attacks both on the northern front and on the liquorice factory and village were repeated at dawn, but again the attacks were not driven home. This arose solely from the fact that the Turk is not good in the attack; he will not close on his foe—which is the character that the Russians always give him.

On 13th and 14th December the enemy's guns remained silent, and it was thought that they were saving ammunition after the fierce bombardments of 10th and 11th December, in which we reckoned they must have fired at least 5,000 rounds of shell. Our casualties on 13th December were 122.

I estimated the strength of the enemy's force besieging me on 14th December to be roughly 12,000, with about 33 guns in position around me.



The enemy had now apparently given up all idea of a direct attack, and was conducting regular siege operations. Opposite our North-west sector there was now a complete network of lines of investing entrenchments with communication ways. The Turks worked everlastingly, by day and night, and with astonishing rapidity. Our troops had by now quite good communication ways and entrenchments in all directions necessary, and the *moral* of the Indian troops began to improve as much as the want of sleep and rest—owing to the necessity of digging in and digging deep with the utmost speed—would permit.

The enemy's snipers were persistent, enterprising, and of tireless energy. A counter sniping detachment was organised under Major Booth of the Army Signal Coy., which worked effectively.

Evans and Wilson, the divisional engineer commander, had directed work from 10th to 16th December, following the general lines of the Principles of Defence which I had laid down.

1. Improving communications from the Main Line of Defence to the Second Line.
2. Improving throughout the Second Line of Defence—as I had particularly ordered.
3. Improving the defence of the town on the western, southern, and south-eastern fronts; for I had always the idea that in the end we might have to make a house-to-house defence in the town.

The lowness of the water in the river rendered me

uneasy about the southern front. It seemed to me to be possible for the enemy to wade across the shoals and banks under cover of darkness, and I watched the eastern and south-eastern fronts accordingly with picquets. The 17th Brigade remained permanently installed at the Fort and the north-east sector. The 16th and 30th Brigades alternately relieved each other as garrison of the north-western section, the brigade relieved taking its place in the Second Line of Defence as General Reserve (available for support to the north-western or north-eastern section, as the case might be). The 18th Brigade supplied the garrison of the liquorice factory village on the right bank, making communication by ferry under cover of darkness. It had two battalions there and two in Kut town, one of which was installed in defence of the southern and south-eastern edges of the town.

In the defence of an entrenched camp, the garrison should be permanently distributed in its own sector of the defence, and not relieved. Such a system is desirable from the point of view of defence and economy in men. In this way the men work voluntarily at improving their defences from sentiments of self-preservation; and—which is more important—they quickly become at home among the bewildering intricacies of trenches and communication-ways which characterise modern defence against modern shell fire. This was the principle I worked on, but it will be seen that when the heavy rains and floods came I was forced—much against my will—to introduce the

system of reliefs, for the men were at times washed out of the trenches and were up to their knees in water.

The Arab inhabitants of the town caused me much anxiety. I knew that they were in communication with the enemy—that went without saying—and my anxiety was based on the fact that many rifles must have been buried and concealed. It was certain that the consequences might be serious if the enemy should induce them to rise in the night when an attack was in progress on our northern front. For that reason I took some of the leading inhabitants into custody and announced that I would shoot them if there was the least sign of treachery. In order to put a stop to the looting of the Arabs at the commencement of the siege I had caused twelve men who had been caught in the act to be tried by military commission and shot, *pour encourager les autres*.

It will have been seen in my defence orders that I had ordered all the inhabitants to be turned out of the town, but, on the intercession of Sir Percy Cox on behalf of the women and children, who, he declared, would perish in the desert from hunger and the bullet of the desert Arab, I changed my mind. When first Sir Percy came to me to ask me not to turn the inhabitants out I told him that it was my duty as the commander of a place about to be besieged to do so. "Very well," he replied, "but I must tell you that all the women and children will perish on the way." I considered that this would have a disastrous political effect in Mesopotamia amongst the Arab population,

whom we had engaged to protect against the Turks. Very reluctantly I altered the order to the turning out of all strangers and permission for *bonâ fide* householders to remain. But this meant, of course, that some 5,000 to 6,000 people remained, while 700 or 800 men only were turned out. I always bitterly regretted my clemency. I did not care how many of the treacherous Arab men were killed or died in the desert—they were deserving of no consideration whatever—but, in the case of women and children, it was a different matter.

On 12th December, I was informed that Government wished to bestow "Rewards or honours for the battle of Ctesiphon on British N.C.O.'s and men of Indian battalions." To this end the Government of India had delegated to Sir John Nixon power to award, for the battle of Ctesiphon, twenty Indian Orders of Merit, forty Indian Distinguished Service Medals to those Indian ranks considered by him to be most worthy of immediate reward, and forty Distinguished Conduct Medals to the British rank and file. Before the advance on Baghdad Sir John Nixon had been empowered by the King to award one D.S.O. and two Military Crosses for November and the same number for December for specific acts of gallantry among officers. The Army Commander left the choice of all the above to me, abiding by my selection, and asked me to wire names, numbers, and corps as soon as I had decided, so that they could be publicly announced.

On 13th December the enemy's trenches were only

50 yards from ours on the extreme left of the north-western front, and working parties could hear each other at work. Brigadier-General Hoghton was anxious about the fort, and asked me to give him 150 British soldiers from the Norfolks (in reserve in Kut town) to reinforce the Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry, while he begged me to remove from his defence one of his Indian battalions, as it was so shaken that he could not rely on it.

I certainly had no reason to be worried about my rifle ammunition, the number of my casualties—over a hundred a day, and sometimes 200—alone kept this question in the background, but the scarcity of British officers among the Indian battalions was a constant nightmare to me. Our casualties had been very heavy—well over 5,000 if Ctesiphon be included, and the *moral* of some of my troops was shaken seriously. General Hoghton told me that he could not answer for the safety of his sector of defence unless I removed the Indian battalion, referred to above, away from it at once—and it must be remembered that General Hoghton was himself an Indian service man. I let General Aylmer know all this by wireless and pointed out to him my grounds for anxiety should the Turks make a determined assault, which, as it will be seen, I was soon to experience.

About 16th and 17th December the apathy of the enemy was very pronounced, and this I ascribed to their losses and consequent discouragement, but I reckoned that the expected “52nd Division,” which



should have finished its concentration at Baghdad, might be arriving soon.

On the night of 17th—18th December, two small sorties were made by the O.C. Fort, Colonel Brown of the 103rd Light Infantry, in which two parties, mixed British soldiers of the Oxford Light Infantry and Indian soldiers, cleared the enemy's trenches close to the fort, bayoneting some thirty Turks and taking several prisoners. Our loss was one man slightly wounded. I believe in a few small sorties, well directed; they strike terror into the enemy; but, to execute many, when troops have always finally to fall back, only lowers their *moral*.

It was evident now that the fort at the north-eastern end of our northern front was the enemy's main objective. His artillery constantly shelled it; large breaches were made, and parts of the wall fell in. As a matter of fact this only increased the strength of the post, for our garrison constantly re-entrenched and blocked up the breaches with sand-bags. It was only when this fort was knocked to pieces that it began to be strong—like the old French fortifications at Verdun!

At 5.30 a. m. the enemy opened a heavy gun and rifle fire on the fort. Cheering and bugling could be heard from the enemy's troops, which were massed in their trenches close to the fort, but, under the steady fire of our troops, their assault did not materialise.

On 16th December I issued general instructions in case the Turks delivered an assault on our lines.

They were read to the men, so that all should know what to do; but my object also was to give them confidence in themselves and courage for the assault which I knew must shortly be delivered. I also wanted to prepare the men for more digging work.

It will be seen that throughout the siege I never ceased to take every means possible of raising the *moral* of the Indian troops, and a change for the better was noticeable after my *communiqué* of 16th December. Trenches were properly deepened and communication ways greatly improved.

The aeroplane report on 16th December, forwarded to me by General Aylmer, showed that my estimate of 12,000 Turks besieging me was an accurate one.

Brigadier-General G. B. Smith, my C.R.A., had now completely broken down in health, and as Colonel Grier, his successor, was hit in the head by a spent bullet, I appointed the next senior, Colonel Courtenay, R.G.A., as my commander of Artillery. On announcing these changes to Sir John Nixon, I reminded him of our talks formerly about the folly of the system of including so few British officers among Indian regiments. The complement of seven, I urged, can only be called criminally foolish. After our heavy fighting at Ctesiphon I was utterly crippled by this system, owing to the heavy casualties among officers. Captains, and, in some cases, subalterns, were commanding battalions. The result was loss of control.

On 19th December, eleven Turkish prisoners taken

in the sortie at night, referred to earlier, were examined. They were all of the 39th Division. They stated that four divisions were besieging Kut—the 35th, 38th, 45th and 51st—and they said they were daily expecting the 52nd and 26th divisions. I did not like this news at all! It meant that about 40,000 men would be besieging me. I wired to Headquarters, and sent a private telegram to Sir John Nixon that I trusted that Government were asking Russia to menace Baghdad seriously, in order to take the strain off me.

Our casualties had now come down to 40 or 50 a day on an average. On 19th December, for example, I see by my diary that we had 57. The enemy were very quiet. I supposed they were waiting for ammunition or reinforcements in order to make a decisive assault on the fort, which was always their main objective. I informed General Aylmer on that date that my defences were now getting quite respectable. I was much handicapped, however, I told him, by having to include the savage warfare fort and the block-houses in my exterior perimeter. I said that I did not wish to be personal, but, seeing that those whom the gods love die young, I hoped that the officer who designed the fort and the block-houses was one whom the gods loved. The famous block-houses I had quickly to demolish, as they made splendid ranging points for the enemy's heavy guns.

On 19th December I received a summary of various official telegrams received by the Army Commander at Basra. By these I learnt of the reports

that Von der Goltz was about to invade Persia with 40,000 men, starting from Baghdad, while Marling wired on 16th December that the Russian Minister had received confidential information that 20,000 Turkish troops had crossed the Persian frontier at Kasr-i-Shirin, and that the Russian Commander at Hamadan was expecting orders to send a force to Khanikin. The Secretary of State for India had wired on 18th December that the Russians intend to occupy Kirmanshah and Khanikin if possible. This did not seem promising, and it plainly indicated to me that the offensive move on Baghdad would not be a serious one.

That Von der Goltz should design to invade Persia seemed likely enough. It seemed possible to me that, in order to turn the English out of Mesopotamia and at the same time to cause political agitation and unrest in Afghanistan and India, he might make a strategic move through the Pusht-i-Kur, in the direction of Ahwaz and the oil fields. Such was indicated as a bold and simple plan for foreigners to evacuate the Tigris valley down to Basra at least.

In view of the arrival of the relieving force and for other obvious reasons I had endeavoured to find a place at the southern or south-western edge of the town where a bridge could be thrown secretly and rapidly across the Tigris. But, though we had roughly fifty mahelas with masts, the D.E.C., whom I consulted in the matter, declared that it was impossible owing to want of roadway planks and wood work. The piles would not hold in the swift current

and oozy mud which formed the bed of the river, and there was no other way of making a bridge except under fire. In reply to enquiries by Aylmer I told him that it would be better to relieve me by the left bank, as we could then join hands. I could not begin to cross until the arrival of the relieving force, for no shelter existed from the enemy's guns, which would enable rafts, etc., to be made. My means of crossing were two tows only, *Sumana* and one launch, two barges, one undecked, and about 50 mahelas, which were unmanageable in the current. The Assistant Quartermaster-General, Divisional Engineer Commander and Marine Transport Officer had worked out that nine days would be required for my crossing the river! At a rate of 700 men being crossed at a time it would quite take two hours for embarking, disembarking and return journey—thus 20 hours were required to get 7,000 infantry over. Three thousand animals—officers' chargers and Maxim Gun mules—at three hours a trip would need 25 trips or 75 hours. Guns, say, three field batteries at 4 hours a trip—five trips, or 20 hours. Field Ambulance—three trips at two hours a trip—six hours. Thirty transport carts—five trips at three hours—15 hours. A total of nine days, with five days added for stores and rations. This might be reduced to six days by working ceaselessly day and night, but I supposed that the Army Commander would bring up his own bridge.

On 24th December, a very heavy rifle fire, supported by artillery, was opened on the liquorice fac-



tory and village at 5.15 a. m., and continued until 8.30, but the enemy made no assault, although their trenches were no more than two hundred yards from the village entrenchments. The Fort had been the scene of another fire fight during the night, and determined efforts had been made by the Turks to cut the wire entanglements, several dead bodies lying on the wires in the morning.

The arrival of Field-Marshal Von der Goltz at Kut now coincided with a determined assault. In the forenoon of 24th December, the fort was heavily bombarded, large breaches were made in the walls, and at 12.30 p. m. the garrison had to retire from the first line of defence in the fort, in which the enemy effected a lodgment. But they in turn were driven out, leaving about a hundred dead in the north-east bastion. I reinforced the garrison of the Fort by the Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry, which now mustered only two hundred rifles. The fire of the Turks recommenced, and was kept up constantly throughout the day.

From the appearance of the enemy's main camp up river and from the unusual boldness of the Turks in attacking in the open, I was certain that they must have received reinforcements, fresh troops whose *moral* had not been shaken at Ctesiphon or on 1st December, at Umm-al-Tubul.

At dusk about 200 dead bodies could be seen outside the Fort, while massing of troops in the rear trenches could be observed, which indicated a new assault.

About midday a 12-centimetre shell swept the top of the house I used as my observation post (the roof of Divisional Headquarters house) killing Captain Begg, R.A., and wounding Lt.-Colonel Courtenay, R.G.A., acting C.R.A., and his staff officer, Captain Garnett, R.F.A. Both died later of their wounds.

At about 2 a.m. on Christmas morning, the expected assault was made on the Fort; the Turks, in desperate fighting, forced their way through breaches into the north-eastern bastion. I sent two hundred of the 48th Pioneers to reinforce the fort garrison, who stood grimly to their posts. After regular "bludgeon" work—as it might be called—with men throwing bombs at each other at ten yards' distance, the Turks were forced to retire into their trenches after bloody losses. The remainder of the Turkish assaulting columns and the reserve could not advance to support the storming parties owing to the curtain of howitzer fire our gunners threw over the Fort.

The Turkish officer who commanded the assault should not have been pardoned for this failure. In an attack of this nature the reserves should be crammed on the heels of the storming parties and assaulting detachments. It is only by piling on your masses that you can succeed. If your advanced parties succeed in effecting a lodgment in the work and are driven out again—as ours were at the Redan on 8th September, 1855, and as the Turks were on this occasion—it is the fault of the commander of the attack. The Turkish division engaged in this assault had just arrived from the Caucasus, and had not lost

*moral.* Its commander was to blame. It was no time to think of loss of life, for if you cannot afford to lose heavily you should not try an assault.

Other faults that the enemy made were:—

(1) The preliminary violent bombardment, which gave me warning that an assault was pending. (2) Neglect to make another false or feinted attack on another part of my lines, to prevent my sending reinforcements to the fort garrison.

In this attempt to carry the fort by assault, nine battalions were told off for the operation, but only the two which formed the assaulting columns got in; the reserves did not advance. The Turkish loss was estimated by us at eight hundred to a thousand, but it was ascertained later, in evidence given by Turkish medical officers, taken prisoners at Sheikh Saad, that fully two thousand were killed and wounded.

At the fort we lost 315 killed and wounded, including 17 officers. The defence was very fine, and Lieut.-Colonel Brown, of the 103rd Light Infantry, who commanded the garrison, deserves great credit. The gallant Oxfords<sup>4</sup> lost heavily, and one company of that fine corps, the 103rd Mahratta Light Infantry, who held a barricade, lost 70 per cent. Casualties elsewhere than the fort were 67, making a total for Christmas Day, of 382.<sup>5</sup>

The repulse of the Turkish assault proved afresh

<sup>4</sup> Which compelled me to take the Norfolks away from the 18th Brigade, and to reinforce the fort garrison with them.

<sup>5</sup> Our casualties for the siege up to this date (4th-25th December, both inclusive) were 1,625.

the valour of the troops composing the Sixth Division, and especially did the men of the Oxford Light Infantry add more glory to the history of that famous regiment, so renowned in the Peninsular War.

After the Turkish assault had been repulsed, the rest of Christmas Day was absolutely peaceful. The garrison of the fort was busy re-trenching and making the place much stronger; I turned my attention to strengthening my second line of defence; and Field-Marshal Von der Goltz returned to Baghdad.

On the 26th December we saw two large columns, which I estimated at two divisions, cross from the left to the right bank at the Shumran bend, where the enemy had thrown across a pontoon bridge, large camps being pitched on the right bank seven or eight miles west of Kut town. This movement, combined with that of much transport to the westward at the same time, gave me the impression that the enemy was beginning a retirement, but it soon became apparent that he was dividing his forces and was placing a part of them on the right bank.

Two sepoys, from the 22nd and 66th Punjabis, deserted to the enemy on 27th-28th December. Both were fired on, but, unfortunately, were not hit.

On 29th December the enemy sent in a flag of truce to the fort, asking for permission to bury their dead. As the letter was addressed to me by the O.C. of a Turkish regiment in the vicinity of the fort, I replied that I would grant an armistice of four hours to bury the dead if the Turkish General-in-Chief

wrote asking me to do so, but that I could not grant an armistice unless the Turkish supreme commander himself asked for it. There would have to be a neutral zone, I said, into which small unarmed parties from either side could go, and, if the Turks used the flag of truce as a cloak to get troops up into the forward trenches, as they had done on similar occasions at Gallipoli, I should open fire with all my guns at once. No answer was received to this communication for two or three days.

On 29th December I telegraphed to Aylmer that it was said by prisoners that the 36th Turkish Division was following the 5th Composite Division (already outside Kut) and was supposed to be concentrated at Baghdad by 21st December. I pointed out that we had quite sufficient strain on us already, and that I felt certain he did not require reasons from me to show why I was anxious on the score of more reinforcements reaching the enemy. I hoped that if he started by 3rd of January from Ali-al-Gharbi, as I understood he would do, he would get to Kut much sooner than the 10th, as Ali-al-Gharbi is only about 56 miles distant. I asked for news as to what reinforcements were coming up river, and further for what news they had of the Russians.

In case my first line of defence became no longer tenable, I ordered my G.S.O., I., to draw up a scheme for withdrawal to the Middle line. This will be found in the Appendix to Part IV.



## CHAPTER XIII

### FIRST ATTEMPTS AT RELIEF

**I**N answer to enquiries by Aylmer, I calculated that I should have no more than 5,000 rifles fit to co-operate with his force when it arrived, and this would include some 400 Sappers and Miners. I should have three Batteries of R.F.A. of four guns each, but with carrying capacity (wagons) reduced fifty per cent., one howitzer battery of four guns, two Naval 4.7 in. guns in horse-boats, with the Divisional Ammunition Column reduced to 60 per cent. of normal. The A.D.M.S. calculated that some 2,000 wounded and sick would have to be sent down at once. This was in view of Aylmer and myself again advancing on Baghdad as soon as I was relieved.

One division of the enemy was seen going eastward towards Essinn on the left bank on the evening of 28th December, and later a transport column took the same road.

The enemy now turned their attention to shelling the Divisional Headquarters in the town every day, our whereabouts evidently having become known to him through the Arabs. Several very close shaves were experienced, the roof and upstairs room being frequently swept. Several men in hospital also were

killed by shells bursting among the wounded in that place. Our casualties now varied between 26 and 36 daily in the ordinary course of events.

Aylmer informed me on 29th December that roughly two divisions, with a brigade of cavalry, composed the relieving force, and he asked for a detailed description of the entrenchments around me. This I furnished.

General Headquarters informed me that there was no news of Russian movements in Persia. From this I gathered with more certainty than ever that they were not making any serious movement on Baghdad; otherwise they would have moved with their forces united *en bloc* on Kirmanshah and Kasr-i-Shirin. Instead, their force was disseminated into several columns traversing Persia, apparently in order to occupy the several important points in the country as one would in a permanent occupation. I felt sure Von der Goltz, who was directing the Turkish strategy in this field of operations, would read it in the same way.

The enemy's snipers had now turned their attention to shooting the women and children of the town when they went to the river in the evening to draw water. The Arabs in the pay of the Turks were also using hollow bullets of the fashion and calibre of the Snider, and several of our people were horribly wounded in consequence.

Two or three bundles of seditious documents in Hindi, signed "Bande Mataram," were discovered laid against our wire entanglements. These called

on the Indian troops to rise and murder the British officers and join their brothers the Turks, who would pay them better and give them grants of land.

Several cases of self-mutilation were detected about this time among the men in one of the Indian battalions, who shot off their trigger fingers and pretended they had been wounded. In order to prevent the powder scorch from showing, they had in each case bound a piece of thick cloth round the finger and hand before discharging the rifle. All these men—twelve or fourteen of them—were tried and received heavy sentences. There were also two or three desertions by Indian soldiers to the enemy on 29th and 30th December, and I had several Courts Martial for cases of cowardice before the enemy and sleeping on post.

On 1st January I received a telegram giving Aylmer's project of operations for the relief of Kut. In this he said that I should naturally realise that in drawing up an appreciation of his advance for relief of Kut it was necessary to give safe dates for arrival, allowing for opposition *en route*. The relieving force could only organise as it arrived at Ali-al-Gharbi; the dates of starting from there allowed for this. Those dates also depended on the arrival of ships from Basra. He objected to pushing forward troops prematurely from Ali-al-Gharbi for my relief and using forced marches; but he was of course ready to take very great risks in the matter should my condition absolutely require it. For example, he said he could, in a very extreme case, start the advance of

a column from Ali-al-Gharbi on 1st January. If there were no opposition such a column could possibly reach Nakhailat on 3rd January, and, by sending troops after them on ships without stopping at Ali-al-Gharbi, they might possibly amount to a division on that date. He could not, of course, say what the enemy would do under such circumstances. We might have to fight them at the Essinn position—and this seemed probable.

“But even in that case the pressure on you would be greatly relieved,” he went on. “If the enemy do not stand between Nakhailat and Kut such a column could join you at Kut on the 4th. Remainder of Corps could not possibly reach Nakhailat till the 8th and Kut till the 9th. I would greatly prefer to make a start from Ali-al-Gharbi with one Division on 3rd January, as proposed in my telegram of December 29th. In such a case, if your condition demanded it, one Division could be at Nakhailat on the 5th and the rest of the Corps on the 8th. By far the best plan, however, from the point of view of the relieving force, would be to advance all together from Sheikh Saad, or its vicinity, as a combined Corps. Nakhailat could possibly be reached on the 8th, though the 9th would be the safer date. Such a plan, though slower, would be far more certain to gain its objective. It is essential to postpone adoption of actual method of advance as long as possible, as hurry means inevitable want of organisation and consequently decrease of efficiency. You may, however, rest assured that everything possible will be done to hurry relief to the

utmost if your circumstances really demand it. I know you will give full weight to such considerations before you give any definite date by which you must be relieved."

On 1st January, 1916, a sepoy of the 103rd Light Infantry, who was on sentry duty, fired two shots at an Indian officer, and, jumping the trench at the fort, tried to escape to the enemy. He was caught, tried by Summary General Court Martial, condemned to death and shot at sunset.

I had a very near shave from a shell about sunset on the top of headquarter house from a gun which suddenly opened fire from the right bank. A shell also went through Major Davie's room, and a third through the house, badly wounding two poor fellows in the Divisional Signal Company. My headquarters were constantly and accurately shelled throughout the siege, for the Arabs of the town used to pass out at night, by swimming the river, and convey information to the enemy. On the same night to which I refer, a shell penetrated the hospital roof and exploded amongst the wounded, wounding two of them afresh.

I replied to General Aylmer's plan of operations for my relief in a telegram on 1st January, saying that as the principle of Economy of Force demands always that a commander should unite all his forces in his hand before he moves forward against the enemy, while this concentration must not take place within striking distance of the enemy, I was naturally in agreement with him in his intention and desire to



unite the bulk of his force with the advanced guard at Sheikh Saad before finally moving forward to my relief. I said also that I should only call for immediate help from Younghusband (who was in command of the advanced guard) in case of necessity, which I did not think would arise, as the enemy were evidently worried and anxious as regards his advance and were in consequence turning their direct attack or siege into a passive investment, and confining their chief activity to bombarding us at night with big guns. I also informed him that a hostile aeroplane, the first we had seen, had passed over Kut in the forenoon, going eastward. I repeated this telegram to General Headquarters at Basra.

My troops had stood the test of a determined assault on the fort very well indeed. The repulse of the Turks on Christmas Day had given a feeling of confidence amongst the troops, and at present I had no misgivings on the score of their *moral* and hoped that the Turks would again try an assault, as a second repulse would greatly discourage all ranks amongst them.

On 2nd January the enemy shelled the town vigorously with eighteen guns, heavy guns as well as quick firers; a Turkish corporal deserted to us and informed us that a new division had arrived in the past two or three days, and, on the 3rd, large bodies of the enemy's troops, estimated at two divisions at least, moved eastwards from the main Turkish camp. I thought at first they were going to attack the fort, but it proved that they were bound down river by

the left bank to oppose the relieving force; on this date also I came to the conclusion that the bulk of the enemy's force must have proceeded down river in this way by night marches in order to oppose General Aylmer's advance, leaving a division at least (possibly two) to contain me at Kut. At 4 p.m. a column of fully 2,000 infantry with six guns and transport moved east along the same road without concealment. The camp on the right bank up stream was now observed to be much reduced in size.

In my diary I see that our total casualties, from 4th to 31st December, were 1,774.

On 5th January, a large column, some five miles in length, estimated at at least 8,000 men with guns, was seen moving east towards Essinn by the left-bank road. On this date a telegram was received from the Corps Commander, asking me if I agreed with General Headquarters' estimate, of January 3rd, of the distribution of the enemy's forces—11,500 infantry and 41 guns on the right bank near their own bridge, 12,000 infantry and 18 guns downstream from Kut, and probably at Essinn. He concluded that the two divisions reported in my telegram of the 3rd, as crossing to the north of Kut and going east, came from Shumran Bend, not from the right bank. He asked what I thought, and if I could estimate their effective strength, as this might assist in identifying them. He said he would try to clear up the situation around me by aerial reconnaissance from Sheikh Saad as soon as the weather permitted, probably on 7th January. The condition of the aero-

planes made reconnaissance from Ali-al-Gharbi very dangerous. He asked my opinion, in case the enemy defended the Essinn position, as he believed they would, how many troops he would have to leave at Kut to hold me.

The General Headquarters telegram, to which the Corps Commander referred, arrived after the above quoted wire, and estimated the enemy's forces on 4th January, as follows:

On the right bank, nine miles west of Kut at the Shumran Bend, the 45th and 36th Divisions, totalling 11,500 bayonets, 41 guns; on the left bank, facing me, the 5th composite, 51st and 38th Divisions, totalling 12,900 bayonets and 24 guns. On the left bank at Essinn 35th Division, total 2,500 men with 18 guns. At Sheikh Saad on both banks were four battalions, 800 cavalry and 1,200 camel corps. A grand total of nearly 30,000 combatants with about 83 guns.

Of these divisions, Headquarters said, all but the 36th have been at some time or other severely handled by us and have probably lost in *moral*. It seemed unlikely to G.H.Q. that the enemy would give Aylmer an opportunity of inflicting a decisive defeat on them down-stream of Kut, but they thought that the enemy would concentrate in force up-stream. The Army Commander considered that, after relieving me, Aylmer ought to entrench in the most suitable position in the neighbourhood of Kut and await further reinforcements. He suggested that Aylmer should consult with me as to the most suitable posi-

tion in which he should install his force at Kut, and that he should suggest the nearest place where all the remaining reinforcements could be concentrated.

I replied to Aylmer that I thought that the enemy's strength was more like 20,000 with 32 guns, but that they had lost 4 to 5,000 men killed and wounded since the siege began. I expected that they would try to contain me with a division whilst the battle was fought at Essinn.

But my estimate of 20,000 and 32 guns was much under the mark. The G.H.Q. estimate was fairly accurate as we afterwards discovered; they actually had about 30,000 men with 70 or 80 guns at this time.

The units and composition of the relief force was now known to me to consist of two Indian divisions returned from France—the 3rd (Lahore) Division under Major-General Keary, and the 7th (Meerut) Division, commanded by Major-General Younghusband. I learnt that General Kembball, late M.G.G.S. to Sir John Nixon, was now in command of a brigade.

The enemy sent an officer with a flag of truce to me on 2nd January. However, I did not cease my fire because of this. The officer brought a message from the Turkish Commander-in-Chief, asking me to facilitate the task of burying the dead who had fallen in the assault on the fort on Christmas night. The stench from the bodies was appalling, while many still hung on our barbed wire on the side of the fort on which the assault was made; he also informed me that Captain Gribbon, of the 67th Punjabis, who

had fallen into their hands, wounded in the combat at the bridge-head, had died of his wounds. The Turkish officer, who was brought blindfolded to my quarters in the town, talked French. I asked him about the projected expedition to Persia, and remarked that with their usual enterprise and energy the Turks would no doubt not stop in Persia, but would invade Afghanistan. And then why not India, a very rich and fertile country? He told me that he thought Field-Marshal Von der Goltz must be at least 76 years of age. I gave him a box of Maspero cigarettes for Nureddin, and said—in the Turkish fashion—that I would send an answer “tomorrow.” I thought it very ungrateful of Nureddin to open a tremendous bombardment on us as soon as the officer reached the Turkish lines, with my last box of Maspero’s! He pumped all his big guns and quick-firers into Kut town, but we had only 24 casualties.

I saw the *Firefly*, which, it will be remembered, had fallen into the hands of the Turks and had now been repaired, move down river round the Shumran Bend and take up a position to shell us with her 4.7 forecastle gun—but she was kept in respect by our 5-inch guns.

The enemy had received a reinforcement of two more divisions, and we saw them marching eastward down river well out of range to reinforce the enemy who were holding up Aylmer.

On 6th January I sent a personal wire to Aylmer, with the idea of instilling the idea of a turning



attack into his mind. I was of the opinion that this was the proper remedy to apply to the question of the relief of Kut. I alluded to the wide turning movement I had made at the battle of Kut in September last. I knew that he was a student of war, but I very much feared the usual frontal attack, which so many of our generals favour, and which I looked upon as doomed to failure.

On 7th January, General Gorringe, now at Nasiriyeh, was to begin a demonstration towards Kut along the Hai, and was to spread reports, I was told by Army Headquarters, that he was going to relieve Kut. I never heard what happened to the demonstration, but there was some fighting, I believe, between the Arabs and a small detachment, the enemy claiming to have inflicted severe loss on our detachment when it fell back on Nasiriyeh.

On 8th January a very hard-fought engagement took place between General Younghusband's division and the enemy's forces, some two and a half miles below Sheikh Saad; the Corps Commander said in his wire that it would appear he was up against the whole of the Turkish forces, with the exception of those facing me. It was anticipated that further heavy fighting was probable. He added: "Will you consider the advisability of making a sortie and let me know?" I read between the lines that Young-husband had been roughly handled.

I replied on the same date: "I was unaware of the fighting below Sheikh Saad—on the left bank, I suppose. I do not know what numbers contain

me here. The Turks are hidden in trenches, which surround me. No air reconnaissance came over on the 7th as promised. I have contemplated a sortie to harass the Turks on their retreat past me on the left bank. I have also been thinking out what I shall do if you are repulsed, and it is in my mind in such a case to attempt to cut my way out; it would be well worth trying if I could even carry off two-thirds of the garrison in doing so. Such a step means abandonment of all guns and all wounded and sick. We have no means of reaching the right bank in sufficient rapidity and secrecy to make effort successful. I think I could fight my way out on the land side, left bank, crossing the maze of trenches by portable ramps which I am having made now. Such a step would only be a desperate necessity. It cannot be in any way advisable at this juncture. I trust and hope you can give me better news soon. If Turkish forces have gone to meet you they cannot be strongly entrenched and their convoys of munitions have to go all the way from here." This wire I repeated as usual to General Headquarters.

At 4.45 p. m. I received the following wire from General Headquarters, dated 8th January:

"Army Commander directs you not to resort to expedient of cutting your way out except in desperate extremity. We have plenty of reinforcements here, which are being sent up as empty shipping is returned from up river, and also daily by road. Will Corps please keep Townshend fully informed of situation?"

I had misunderstood Aylmer, and thought he was sounding me as to whether I could cut my way out. Shortly afterwards I received a wire from Corps Commander:

“On January 5th, aeroplane reported enemy strongly entrenched astride the river about two miles west of Sheikh Saad. Numbers as follows: 4,500 on north side of river, 6,500 on south side. The latter includes some 2,000 cavalry. Enemy have no bridge with them.”

Later in the day another telegram came from the same source:

“In asking you to consider advisability of making sortie, of course I only meant by way of creating a diversion and thus relieving pressure here. There is absolutely no idea yet of your having to cut your way out. I do, however, contemplate some delay in reaching you, as I am opposed by very considerable numbers.”

Reading between the lines of this telegram, it seemed to me that the situation was really serious. Finally I heard from the Corps Commander that night that: “Owing to the fatigue of the troops, on account of yesterday’s efforts, I have been unable to make any progress to-day.” He had troops on both banks of the river; he estimated that he was opposed by 15,000 Turks; his own casualties were approximately 3,000; and his forward progress would be slow till reinforcements arrived. I was certain now

that the situation was very serious, though of course I did not say so to anyone; and I turned my thoughts to my food supply for the garrison. This Colonel Annesley explained to me was as follows—on 8th January:

British troops .. ..	30 days' rations
Indian troops .. ..	29 “ “
Grain .. ..	8 “ “
Fodder .. ..	7 “ “
Tinned meat .. ..	8 “ “
Meat on hoof .. ..	17 “ “
Tea .. ..	15 “ “

I received a private telegram from Sir John Nixon on 8th January. He informed me that the doctors had invalided him and that he expected to have to start in a week or so. Before leaving he hoped that Aylmer and I would join hands. He said he had told Sir Beauchamp Duff that he was handing over to Aylmer, as next senior, and that he had recommended me to succeed to the command of the Army Corps of the Tigris. The policy of our advance on Baghdad was criticised in the papers at home, but strongly defended by Lord Crewe. Sydenham, in the House of Lords, called it a failure, but all were glad to think that, from the point of view of the fighting-man, it was a glorious failure.

Another telegram from Aylmer, concerning the fighting of the Relief Force near Sheikh Saad, reached me late at night on the 8th. He said that Kemball was entrenched on the right bank, astride

the telegraph line, with six battalions. On the left bank two brigades held a trench for three miles of line at right angles to the river. He had six battalions in reserve on the left bank. From examination of prisoners he estimated that he was opposed by at least 15,000 infantry and cavalry, including Arabs, who were very numerous. He did not think he was able to outflank the Turks on the left bank with his present numbers. His forward progress would be slow till reinforcements arrived, and he trusted everything would be done to expedite their arrival.

Colonel Annesley reported on this date the loss by theft of 1,000 bags of flour. This I put down to the troops, who had to take some bags of flour in the first hurry of the defence to erect barricades when I first began to put Kut in a state of defence, no sand-bags being available. I am not at all certain that this theft was the only one during the siege. There seemed to be always a leakage, in spite of all precautions. The difference between our estimated supplies and the actual amount which materialised was very considerable, but was accounted for theoretically as wastage due to the cleaning of the grain.

In my diary of 9th January, I find: "I wired to Aylmer again asking for an aeroplane on 9th January so that I can get a rough estimation of the Turks containing me here. There is no doubt that if I attacked their main camp on the left bank and took it and drove away steamers, etc., it would bring the 'Turks' main force back here very quickly. But



I must have no doubt about winning. My troops are far different from what they were two or three months ago."

Hope was again raised by the arrival of a telegram from Aylmer: "The enemy has retired up stream [from Sheikh Saad] and I am pursuing. Heavy rain makes movement most difficult."

But these hopes were modified on the next day when he informed me that his troops were greatly exhausted by wet and cold. I noted that they were still divided on both sides of the river—General Kemball and six battalions at Sheikh Saad on the right bank, and the remainder of the Corps on the left. No air reconnaissance, he said, had been possible owing to inclemency of the weather; present reports indicated that the enemy were retiring on or beyond Orah.

I suggested to Aylmer that Nureddin might halt behind the Chubibat salt water canal at Orah, in order to gain time to enable this new army corps reported to be on the point of arriving to materialise. One division was due on 20th January, and "it must be remembered that all the latest arrivals of Turkish reinforcements have been far ahead of the time indicated by our Intelligence Department." The Chubibat Canal I believed to be no obstacle worth considering. It could be crossed anywhere at that time of the year, except at the northern end. I repeated the wire to General Headquarters.

It was evident that Nureddin was fighting delaying actions in order to give time for some other por-

tion of the Turkish army to join him. This was only my opinion, but to me it was obvious. Also it was plain that he had retreated in the night unmolested, which did not look like a defeat. I communicated these thoughts to Aylmer on the 10th.

Bunting was displayed on the Turkish steamers on the morning of 9th January, ships being dressed; and cheers were given in their trenches. We ascribed this to the fact that the British Force at Gallipoli had re-embarked, and this proved to be the case.

On the afternoon of 10th January, four or five parties of infantry, none of them under 200 men, walking in groups and not in military formation, apparently lightly wounded men, came past us from down river on the left bank, going west. We saw a considerable number of tents on the right bank which had not been there before. There was much activity in the Turkish main camp this afternoon. A convoy of 600 camels came from west to east by the right bank, crossing the Shatt-al-Hai and going into the Turkish main camp. Aylmer wired me that his losses were 3,793 wounded at Sheikh Saad alone. He could not give the number of dead; but in ordinary proportions his dead, I reckoned, must be 600 or 700. He said that the Turks had retired to Essinn and were in position there on both banks. He spoke of very bad weather—wet and cold. We had beautiful weather in Kut on 10th January, but at Sheikh Saad the mountains were much closer to the river.

At 10 p.m. I received a telegram from Corps Commander, saying that the Turks had returned

again,<sup>1</sup> and were entrenching a line on both banks of the Wadi (creek or river). This I supposed to be the Chubibat Canal at the top of the Orah bend, about nine miles up stream of Sheikh Saad on the left bank.

We could tell by intercepted wireless messages that General Aylmer was attacking the Turks in their position on the Wadi, on 13th January, and that General Younghusband was turning the position whilst General Kemball held them in front. At about midnight of 13th-14th January, I received a wireless from Aylmer, to say that at dusk Kemball was holding the enemy along his eastern front two miles along the Wadi. Younghusband, evidently making a turning manœuvre, had pushed round the north of the enemy's position and claimed that his right flank was almost up to the river Tigris. I hoped that now the enemy would be well beaten.

On 14th January a wireless, intercepted in the morning, showed that the enemy were supposed to be retiring, with Kemball starting in pursuit. The enemy's losses were supposed to be heavy. At 11.35 a. m. General Aylmer's telegram showed that the battle had been of an obstinate and indecisive nature, but the enemy seemed to be on the retreat as large masses were observed moving west. The turning movement of the 7th Division had been held up by Turkish forces facing north and fighting on an east and west

<sup>1</sup> I believe that Nureddin was actually retreating when Von der Goltz arrested his retreat, superseded Nureddin with Khalil Pacha, and ordered the latter to entrench on the line of the Wadi.

line. The action had been close and continuous till nightfall. General Kemball had attacked the enemy's front with the 28th Brigade, but had been repulsed, and had withdrawn to the east bank of the Wadi.

Our engineer officers estimated, from sketches they had made, that the enemy had dug fully thirty miles of investment works—entrenchments, communication ways, etc.—around Kut on both banks. When it is remembered that the German lines of investment around Metz in 1870 were roughly twenty-four miles, some idea of the extent of the Turkish investment works will be arrived at. The actual circumference of the investing lines was roughly fifteen miles, but in most places the lines of works were triple.

There are no trials in military service, not even excepting the trials of a commander in a retreat, to approach in any way those of the commander of a besieged force. The responsibility of command in battle in the field is nothing compared with it, for you are free and can advance on the offensive, adopt the defensive-offensive, or retreat if you wish to avoid action. Besieged, one is in a constant state of nerves, be your head as cool as an ice-chest. All watch you and hope for news.

Every evening I used to go through the hospitals to see the poor fellows lying wounded there, and have a chat with them. All wanted good news—and I always acted as if I were full of spirits; but it was acting all the time. Several times I was told: "You'll get us out of it, General. We know that. After

getting us out of the First of December you'd get us out of anything."

They all had a touching confidence in me. . . . Surely no General has ever had a more devoted command than my Sixth Division.

I had no illusions as to Aylmer's difficulties, or his real progress. It began to look as if he could not relieve me before large Turkish reinforcements arrived—which had been my fear from the first, and was the reason why I protested against relief in two months and demanded it in one. Had Aylmer's command been an all-British one, there would have been no doubt of the success of the relief force in my mind, nor in any of those serving under me.

I was anxious and irritated at the dearth of news I received from Aylmer, and perhaps unjustly so. But I have no doubt that if I worried him, he, with his frank, loyal, and brave character, forgave an anxiety not unnatural under the circumstances, for there was serious demoralisation amongst a large proportion of my troops, and other troubles, of which it is not desirable I should speak here.

We had now reached 15th January—the date indicated to Aylmer as the one beyond which it would be hazardous to expect me to hold out, owing to the expected arrival of Turkish reinforcements—and I began to be much concerned at the slow progress of the relief force. I shut my force up in Kut on the distinct understanding that I was to be relieved in a month. We had now been besieged for six weeks. The Relief Force had fought two indecisive actions—



pushing the enemy back, it is true, but only three or four miles at the most—and had suffered at least as heavily as he, and, I expected, much more heavily. If the progress of the relief force was so slow now, what would it be when the Turkish reinforcements arrived?

On 16th January, the Corps Commander informed me in a telegram to the Army Commander, which he repeated to me, that, from the fact that I had seen guns and infantry coming back to the Turkish main camp on the left bank, it was indicated to him that the enemy's intention was to delay the Relief Force in a defile and to bring a large body from their bridge above Kut or Essinn on to the right bank, in order to fight there or beyond it and to cut his communications. He said he was throwing a bridge across the Tigris just above the Wadi and was putting all the troops of the 7th Division on the right bank. If the enemy did not advance, he would do so when he had finished this, and he would endeavour to outflank the enemy's position in the defile<sup>2</sup> from the right bank.

I sent the following telegram to Aylmer: "On behalf of myself and the Sixth Division, I wish to express the deep appreciation we feel at the gallant efforts of the relieving force under your command and our sympathy at your losses. We hope to thank you *de vive voix* before long."

The enemy were very busy all day on the left flank of their northern investment, digging and putting up

<sup>2</sup> This defile is caused by the proximity of the marsh to the river on the left bank.

barbed wire on the left bank east of the fort, apparently to prevent us from making a sortie in force at night by that exit to aid an attack by Aylmer by the left bank of the river.

On this date, Field-Marshal Von der Goltz, with his staff of German, and some Turkish, officers, was seen inspecting the lines in front of Kut. One of our guns fired on the group, which took refuge in a trench. I was very annoyed with the officer who ordered this gun (at the fort) to be trained on the Field-Marshal and fired without my orders, for I had a great respect for the man whom I considered the leading strategist in Europe. I ordered the fire to cease at once.<sup>3</sup> I was told afterwards by Turkish officers that the shell nearly got the Field-Marshal.

On 17th January the news received by wireless from Aylmer was not very cheerful. His advance was delayed, he said, by atrocious weather, which delayed the construction of his bridge. His losses in the engagements of 7th and 13th January had amounted to over 6,000 killed and wounded, and this wastage was considerably in excess of the reinforcements he had received since he advanced from Ali-al-Gharbi; he ended by saying that his fighting strength at the moment did not exceed 9,000 combatants. This was bad enough news, but my doubt as to the possibility of the Relief Force being able to join hands with me was confirmed by the receipt of

<sup>3</sup> Compare the reconnaissance by Masséna in 1810 in front of the lines at Torres Vedras. The British officers would not allow the guns to open fire on him, but a shot was fired wide of him to warn him to go.

the series of wireless messages with which I end this chapter.

From Corps Commander (i.e., General Aylmer) to General Headquarters (copy to 6th Division), 16th January, 1915:—

“The position of affairs must be frankly faced. The enemy is blocking the entrance of the Wadi Nakhailat defile with very strong works, and, judging from his dispositions within them, they have been designed to resist a heavy bombardment from across river as well as an attack in front. His bivouac shelters seem to indicate I shall have opposed to me his whole 52nd Division and two regiments of the 35th and 38th Divisions. But of course I cannot be certain of this. Emplacements for 19 guns have been seen, eleven of which are designed to fire across the river. Behind in defile there is a single line of entrenchments through ‘y’ of Sannaiyat, between marsh and river, probably one and a half miles long. Behind again is the Essinn position.

“It is impossible in my opinion, to take the first position by a *coup de main* from this side alone, without losing half the force. It was my intention to cross the 3rd Division and Cavalry Brigade to right bank, directly the bridge is finished, and thus enfilade enemy’s position. Even by this means I do not think our progress as an entire force can be anything but very slow. Information indicates that reinforcements may have begun to arrive at Kut, and these may soon amount to a very considerable number. On right bank below Kut at present there do not

seem, at outside, more than 2,000 men, and rain is evidently rendering the Hai crossing difficult for transport. The best plan seems to me for Townshend to cross the river during the night with such able-bodied men as he has got in the mahelas and other river transport available, and march well round Essinn on the right bank. I would cross about one division and Cavalry Brigade at same time and march to meet him and bring him back here. The opportunity is now favourable and may cease directly enemy send troops down right bank, which may be very soon. On December 20th, Townshend informed me he had 50 mahelas, besides other river craft. If these still exist it should be about sufficient for his purpose, though he would have to leave sick and men unable to march, and to destroy most of his guns and material. If Townshend thinks that this is possible, I shall issue orders for him to do so. Addressed G.H.Q., repeated 6th Division, Commander of which is requested to wire at once feasibility of passage and earliest date on which he can be ready, remembering that opportunity may not recur."

Before I could send an answer I received the following telegram from the Army Commander, addressed to Corps and repeated to me on 17th January:—

"I do not in any way agree with your appreciation of the situation, or that same calls for Townshend to take the extreme step you propose.

"Only circumstances that could in my opinion

justify this course would be a demoralisation of your force, which I have no reason to suspect.

"You have been opposed from Sheikh Saad by 35th, 38th and 52nd Divisions, some Gendarmerie and Cavalry, totalling rather over 15,000, with at the outside 41 guns, and you have twice defeated them.

"Townshend has been contained by 45th and 51st Divisions, totalling possibly 8,000, with 17 guns.

"Townshend has reported strong column, estimated at one division and 12 guns, retiring to main camp west of Kut. Enemy have further suffered losses estimated by you at 4,500 at Sheikh Saad, and 2,000 at Wadi. You therefore should have between you and Kut not more than 5,000, and possibly 27 guns.

"The total of your losses should almost have been made good by reinforcing units—your bridge gives you freedom of manœuvre. The course you originally proposed, namely, to employ part of your force on right bank, should not only promise success but afford you opportunity of inflicting severe blow on enemy and effecting speedy relief to Townshend. I cannot believe that position in front of you can equal in strength those attacked and captured by us in the past, which had been in preparation for four months.

"The course you now propose for Townshend in your telegram under reply would be disastrous from every point of view to Townshend's force, to your force, to the whole of the forces in Mesopotamia, and to the Empire, and I cannot sanction it. There is no reason to suppose enemy has yet been reinforced



by a sixth division, and the possibility of it arriving only emphasises necessity of prompt action. Both acknowledge."

On 17th January, I sent a wireless message to the Corps Commander that I supposed he would now advance by the right bank with his maximum force, leaving his minimum force entrenched to guard the ships; it was not likely that the Turks could take the offensive on the left bank so long as I held Kut and blocked his steamers and barges, etc.

I reminded him that I had informed him on 7th January and 22nd December, that it was impossible for me to gain the right bank with rapidity or secrecy unless the relieving force arrived on the right bank, south of Kut, where he would be covered from the enemy by the important obstacle of the Hai, now five feet deep at the ford. I reckoned that I could put only 4,000 men at the outside across in one night. That would leave 5,000 more combatants in Kut, in addition to wounded, sick and followers and departmental men. "Animals, officers' chargers and machine-gun mules come to about 3,000, and would take three hours a trip; 25 trips require 75 hours. The three field batteries would require some 20 hours. But all guns and munitions would have to be destroyed, also animals, as none could be crossed in the one night which is essential for the success of the sortie. Such slowness in crossing the river is appalling—there is no other word for it—but there is no possible means of a speedier solution of the problem."

It will be seen that I had good reason in telling

Evans at the beginning of the siege, when I was prevented by the weariness of the troops from throwing across a bridge opposite the Hai River, that this would have a serious bearing on the defence.

Telegram from the Corps Commander to General Headquarters (repeated 6th Division), dated 17th January, 1916:—

“I understand your telegram to mean that you desire me to get to Kut in such a way as to hold that place together with Townshend, at least until his force can be removed entirely. That is, that you do not wish Townshend’s breaking out to form any part of my plan.

“If this is so, the plan suggested by Townshend is opposed to your views, and in my opinion less likely to succeed than what I suggested, as my remaining opposite Kut while Townshend took several days to get across river would lead to Turks assaulting the place when half denuded of troops. The only way to relieve Townshend without the necessity of his breaking out is for me to force the defile and join hands with him by left bank.

“This I shall attempt to do by the means already indicated, namely, cross the river with part of my force, enfilade enemy, and then assault his position. I have only just succeeded in completing bridge, owing to extreme difficulty in getting it up from Sheikh Saad and reconstructing it here on account of storm and torrents of rain, the quantity of material, and only one Company of Sappers and Miners. The country round is a sea of mud and animals can

hardly move. I am using my utmost endeavours to expedite carrying out plan, but it must be recognised that conditions have been extraordinarily unfavourable. A comparison between works in front of me and those elsewhere is difficult, but these cannot be turned except in a modified manner by enfilade fire from opposite bank. I have now just heard that bridge is broken again."

On 18th January I sent the following wireless in reply to the above:—

"Let me make it clear that my project is not the right bank; I thought that it was your idea after you had met with such difficulties and had suffered such losses. If you could plant your guns on right bank *en enfilade* of the Turks entrenched on the left bank it should dislodge them, especially as your fire would force the Turkish ammunition and food convoys to make a detour northward. No, my project would have been to have advanced on the left bank with all my force united in my hand, since the bulk of the hostile force is on the left bank. Perhaps I should have entrenched a minimum force of two battalions on the right bank to guard my ships, as I did in my action of Kut-al-Amara, in September last, on the principle that the enemy must be defeated in order to gain my objective. At the same time it seems to me that if you arrived here on the south bank as suggested in my 69.97.G of 17th January, and installed your guns east and south of Kut town, on the right bank, their enfilade fire would facilitate our crossing the river."

In view of the above telegrams I deemed it desirable to indicate to Aylmer what I should do if he were unable to relieve me, repeating the message to the Army Commander. So I wired on the same date that to attempt a sortie in force on the right bank, with possibly 3,000 men, threatened destruction, as the enemy in trenches 300 yards from the bank must detect the movement and then it would be destruction when morning came. It meant the abandonment of all wounded, sick, guns, transport, etc.

My idea was to fight on from trench to trench and house to house, till no more ammunition was left. I said that I knew that, when all hope is past, and not till then, the traditions of war in military history justify a general in making terms on fair conditions; like, for example, Junot's French force in Portugal in 1808, which was transported in ships, with arms, guns, and baggage, and landed in France. "As long as I hold Kut," I said, "the enemy cannot take the offensive against us towards Amarah, as his steamers and barges are absolutely necessary. If you cannot relieve me and cannot maintain yourself where you are, you will have to retreat; the weather here has been very bad, the rain last night has been heavy and the trenches have two feet of water in them—in many cases more—causing much discomfort and hardship for the men. I think this is the end of the wet weather; the inhabitants say so."

From General Headquarters to 6th Division (repeated Corps), dated 18th January, 1916:—

"It would appear you contemplate the practical

evacuation of Kut with abandonment of stores and guns after relieving column has reached there. This is by no means the intention of Army Commander. On arrival of Aylmer's column our force should be in superior strength to enemy and neither Kut nor guns nor stores must be abandoned. If Aylmer's force is so disposed along Hai to south, with portion of it to north on your right flank, and is unable at first to clear enemy from your front, there would appear to be no difficulty to combined force maintaining position whilst remainder of reinforcements concentrate at Essinn or east of same. By first week February all columns now marching should have reached Sheikh Saad, including drafts to complete Sixth Division to service strength.

"Force will then total four full divisions, except for two Brigades of artillery, and we should be able to assume offensive with a view to clearing front and securing permanent position further west covering Kut.

"Consider and advise Aylmer, repeating here what dispositions of corps on arrival would fit in best with above plans."

In answer to the above message of the Army Commander, I said that the reason why I contemplated the abandonment of stores and guns was because the Corps Commander said it was the best thing I could do. Personally I had never wished to abandon Kut, and I had made my stand there because I judged it my duty to hold up the Turkish forces and give time for reinforcements arriving in Mesopotamia to con-



concentrate on Amarah and Ali-al-Gharbi, although I knew well the usual fate of a force which shuts itself up in an entrenched camp. But I had bargained to be relieved in a month. I was delighted to hear that Kut was not to be abandoned.

## CHAPTER XIV

### FURTHER ATTEMPTS AT RELIEF

ON 19th January the persistent rain ceased, and we got a fine day. Heavy gun fire was heard to the eastward—evidently Aylmer's guns on the right enfilading the Turkish position at Umm-al-Hannah on the left bank.

I received a message from General Aylmer, on 20th January, that he was ready to attack. One of his two divisions, the Cavalry Brigade, and some guns were on the right bank in order to enfilade the right flank of the Turkish entrenched position on the left bank. Their main position stretched from the marsh to the river.

On this date I issued orders for the possible move out of Kut to support Aylmer. These will be found in the Appendix to Part IV.

On the evening of the 19th we were astonished to see over 2,000 Turkish infantry, with large numbers of camels, coming back from the direction of Essinn on the left bank, and bound for the Turkish main camp up river. This would leave only some 4,500 Turks in front of General Aylmer, according to our estimates. We could hear his guns bombarding the Turkish position all this day. He informed me that

he would assault the position at daybreak on 21st January; and, on the evening of the 20th, we could plainly see shells bursting in the distance.

On 21st January, at 2 p.m., I received a wireless from the Corps Commander, giving very bad news. His assault had been repulsed. His troops had remained between one and two hundred yards of the enemy's front line; only one battalion, the Black Watch, had succeeded in getting into the enemy's trenches, and they had been bombed out again. They intended, he said, to resume the bombardment and assault again in the afternoon. This was the worst news we had received during the siege.

It rained hard all day; the swollen river had flooded my first-line trenches, and even part of the middle line, to the great misery of the troops. There seemed no doubt that, work as we might, the water would compel us to abandon the first line of defence, thus practically isolating the fort.

On 21st January we had fourteen days' full rations for British and Indian troops, fodder up to the 25th, and thirty days' grain for the animals, with ten days' tea for British units, and we had also ten days' supply of country flour, purchased from the inhabitants. I decided to put the troops on half rations and lay hands on all the foodstuffs in the town.

It will have been seen that in my orders for the defence of Kut, I distinctly ordered all foodstuffs to be commandeered, but the Military Governor had found it easy to buy; so my orders had not been carried out in this respect. This was due to my not

having drawn special attention to the order, I suppose—not surprising, seeing that I was occupied night and day with orders for the actual defence of the place. As I now felt convinced that our defence would have to be a long one, I determined to seize every kind of foodstuffs, so that equal distribution might be made to everyone during the siege.

We found large stores of grain in the town by means of a house-to-house search, and by offering rewards for information as to concealed grain and foodstuffs, for the well-to-do inhabitants tried to conceal their food.

In the evening I received another message from Aylmer, that the afternoon assault had failed also. He announced a third assault for the afternoon of the morrow. He feared his casualties had been very heavy. Another telegram from him spoke of renewing the attack on 22nd January, but said that he looked upon it rather as a forlorn hope.

He said that the only way I could help him was to make a sortie on a large scale, endeavouring to defeat what was in front of me, and returning to Kut again. Success would probably cause the enemy to retire from the defile in front of him. He asked if I could do it soon.

Telegram from Corps Commander to 6th Division (repeated to G.H.Q.), dated 21st January, 1916:—

“We have made two assaults on enemy’s entrenched position here without success.

“I shall renew attack to-morrow but acknowledge that at present it appears rather a forlorn hope. My

losses have been very heavy. The only way you can help us is to make a sortie on a large scale and endeavour to defeat what is in front of you, returning on to Kut again. Success would mean that enemy now opposing me would probably retire from this defile. The enemy's losses have undoubtedly been very considerable, both from artillery and infantry fire. He has received two battalions at least as reinforcement, from where I cannot say, as air reconnaissance is impossible. If you can do this please do it soon."

This was followed by another wire from Aylmer to General Headquarters (repeated to 6th Division), dated 22nd January:—

"It has rained incessantly this afternoon and to-night. The country is now in a most flooded and boggy condition, and movement of troops most difficult, their suffering great. On right bank G.O.C. 3rd Division reports river to have topped the bank in one place and to be rapidly forming large marsh to west of position recently occupied by him, thus creating serious obstruction to any further advance up the river by that bank. *I am forced to abandon my intention, re attacking enemy's position to-morrow, as troops in front line have been withdrawn without my orders to vicinity of entrenched position occupied by them two days ago, about 1,300 yards from enemy's trenches. They are greatly disorganised owing to unsuccessful attempt to storm enemy's position, making it utterly impossible to send them back again at present.*



"I shall send my appreciation of situation to-morrow."

I have italicised a passage above to draw attention to the gravity of this telegram. Such an operation as Aylmer suggested to me required to be combined to be successful, apart from other considerations to be reckoned with and arranged for. For example, directly I moved out of Kut to fight my way out eastward—and to do this I must assault the enemy's investing works and redoubts of great strength in the open, wading up to the waist in water in places, and under an enfilade artillery fire—our northwest section of defences would be immediately attacked and assaulted by the bulk of the investing troops. The minimum force I should have to leave behind at Kut, to defend a great extent of front, would not amount to much, since my entire strength in bayonets was only 6,450 on 21st January. In making a sortie in force, in which it was intended to return, I might well lose Kut and everything in it and be finished off in the open between the two forces. Therefore this was a measure which required much forethought and plans calculated between Aylmer and myself.

I wired to him that night, saying that I was undergoing the same weather conditions at Kut as he. All hands were engaged in fighting the inundation, which was driving us out of our trenches. I suggested that he should hold on for reinforcements, for, from what he said, I did not think another assault would succeed. I had put all my people on half rations and thus could hold on another 27 days. I also mentioned that

about 500 camel corps and 3,000 infantry had passed Kut, going from east to west on the left bank, that is to say, coming back from the battle. "I cannot understand why all these troops are returning from opposing you."

The Corps Commander further wired to General Headquarters (repeated to 6th Division) on 22nd January, 1916:—

"I regret there is no doubt in attempting to assault enemy's position yesterday, we have suffered a severe reverse in spite of greatest gallantry of troops, and our losses are very heavy. The troops in retiring removed as many wounded as possible, but many must remain near enemy's front line trenches. I am sending a request to Turks for six hours' armistice to bury dead and bring away wounded. For the present I shall hold the line about 1,300 yards in front of enemy's position and a reserve line behind. The troops' condition may be regarded as prohibiting advance for the present.

"My proposals will follow on receipt of further information or extent of reverse. Weather is atrocious and floods increasing."

Telegram from Corps Commander to General Headquarters (repeated to 6th Division), dated 22nd January, 1916:—

"At yesterday's assault Black Watch greatly distinguished itself, but suffered heavily."

Telegram from Corps Commander to General Headquarters (repeated to 6th Division), dated 22nd January, 1916:—

"From detailed statements taken from six prisoners, including one officer, which follows, it will be seen that force in front of me yesterday consisted of whole of 52nd and combined 35th and 38th Divisions, *plus* two battalions 51st Division, *plus* 26 guns. Drafts have evidently been lately received by units. Allowing for previous losses this force would admittedly amount to at least 9,000 infantry. I am quite certain Townshend has observed most carefully, but, if all troops reported by him as marching westward during last fortnight be taken as additional and deducted from enemy in front of me, I should have only had to fight about 5,000 yesterday, not allowing for losses. My *parlementaire* to-day, who was towards front position, himself saw two regiment and one artillery commanders, and Khalil Bey's name was given as being in command. He is reported to have superseded Nureddin.<sup>1</sup> My losses are very heavy indeed. I cannot yet ascertain numbers in all cases, but the 9th Brigade alone lost over 1,000 and 27 officers. The troops are not at present in a state to assault such a position, even if only held by 3,000 men; they have done most nobly all that is possible in the face of the severest conditions. I cannot call on them to do what is impossible in their present state. I will naturally do all I can to ascertain the remaining strength of the enemy in front of me.

<sup>1</sup> This was quite correct. Von der Goltz superseded Nureddin when he began to fall back in front of Aylmer in the Sheikh Saad fighting, *pour encourager les autres*. Khalil is uncle to Enver Pacha, the War Minister, and very popular with the troops owing to his courage.

"I arranged an armistice up to 6 p. m. to-day, and a certain number of wounded have been brought in and dead buried, but the Turks have taken into their lines the wounded immediately in front of their trenches and were most active in doing so."

There was no doubt left in my mind after this message. It was plain that Aylmer could do nothing to aid me until reinforcements reached him. Sir Percy Lake, the Commander-in-Chief in Mesopotamia, who was at Basra, evidently took the same view, for on receipt of the above telegram he wired to Aylmer, repeating the wire to me, to say that, as he gathered he had deliberately decided that a further advance was impossible at present, he suggested that Aylmer should establish himself on the best position he could find, holding both banks of the river, connected by a bridge behind him, unloading all his river-craft and sending them back empty. Gorringe had been sent to Amarah to organise the reinforcements as they arrived there from Basra, and send them on to Aylmer. The date on which these reinforcements would arrive depended on the rapidity with which Aylmer could free his river-craft. He informed Aylmer that he was responsible for the line of communications in his immediate rear, and he must take measures to prevent Arab raids. He left Aylmer two steamers, so that, if the enemy retreated before him, he would be able, when following them up, to take forward his supplies by relays, and could pass troops from one bank to the other. Aylmer was to take immediate steps to carry the above measures into effect.

With regard to Aylmer's suggestion that I should make a sortie on a large scale, I considered that it was perfectly impossible at the time. We were engaged night and day in fighting the floods which had invaded our trenches and threatened to wash us out of Kut. The enemy also were driven out of their first-line trenches, and we punished them severely with our fire when they had to fall back before the rising water, and run for safety across the open. The trenches presented the appearance of canals, with an amazing network of mole-like heaps standing out of the inundation. If I had had no enemy to oppose me, it would have been a difficult operation even by day to get my troops and guns through that veritable lake of mud, with enormously deep trenches covered by water. In order to cross these obstacles, I was having hand-bridges and ramps constructed by the sappers, but these appliances could not be made in a day. They took six.

I cannot imagine that any commander has experienced greater difficulties than I did in this siege. Every kind of trial, every kind of obstacle is to be met with in that accursed country, Mesopotamia. After great exertions, with an enemy attacking us, we managed to dig ourselves in at Kut. As soon as the defences began to be respectable, and two decisive assaults of the enemy had been repulsed, rain came to swell the river, to aid the dreaded floods of the Tigris, to delay and hamper our relief force. Finally the floods came—to wash us out of our trenches, to force the men to live standing in water up to their



knees, and consequently to fill the hospitals with disease and sickness. What worries, what trials, what anxieties were experienced by me in that siege!

In a wire to the Army and Corps Commanders, on 23rd January, I pointed out that I now had to face the situation from the point of view of my own command. We had already passed 15th January, beyond which date Aylmer had said, in the appreciation of the situation he made before he advanced to my relief, there would be a danger that relief would be impossible through the arrival of Turkish reinforcements. It will be remembered that I bargained to be relieved in a month from 4th December; at the furthest by 10th January.

On thinking over the situation, and seeing that Aylmer had shot his bolt for the present, I had arrived at a choice between three resolutions, if Aylmer and Sir Percy Lake considered that two brigades of infantry and one battery—the expected reinforcements—were insufficient to effect my relief, given the disheartened state of Aylmer's combatants, now reduced to 9,000.

*A.* I might extricate my force by making a sortie by the right bank, as Aylmer had suggested on 17th January. In this case I should make straight for Sheikh Saad, twenty-five miles away, by the desert route, asking him to send a column half-way to stretch out a hand to me. Between 28th January and 3rd February, I hoped that night conditions would enable me to get about 4,000 able-bodied men across the river in the night, to start on this march.

I should take those of most service to the state, engineers, sappers, gunners, signallers, flying men, British infantry, Indian infantry, cavalry and a proportion of medical personnel. The slightly wounded, sick, weak, and all unable to march would be left behind, guarding the wounded in the hospitals under a Brigadier-General, who could make terms with the enemy. All guns would be destroyed. The *Sumana* with two barges would endeavour to run the gauntlet. We should carry 200 rounds a man, great-coats, and two days' food on our backs.

*B.* Or I might stay at Kut and prolong the resistance till the last cartridge or last ounce of food remained—on the defence of Saragossa or Genoa principle.

*C.* Or I might preserve the force to Government by negotiating with the enemy to let them have Kut whilst my force marched through their lines and joined Aylmer, as Junot did at Lisbon, in 1808, under the Convention of Cintra, whereby the French force of 20,000 men were taken with their arms and baggage in British ships to France and landed there, in exchange for Lisbon. In this case negotiation should be begun while I had food to argue with. No terms are ever given by your opponent if he knows you have no food left and starvation is at hand to compel you to capitulate. All history proves that.

I concluded by saying that I considered "A" the best course.

I had given up all hope of the Russians, but I again asked that General Baratoff, now at Kasr-i-

Shirin, be told of my serious situation at Kut, and be invited to press Baghdad seriously.

I got a reply to my telegram to the Army Commander on the same day, that he "still hoped to be able to effect your relief." He said that he would be better able to express a definite opinion after he had reached Aylmer's headquarters, about 28th January; he thought B and C proposals unnecessary and out of the question, and that I should prepare to carry A into effect, but must keep the matter secret from my troops. I should also consider the possibility of co-operation with the relieving force on the assumption that Aylmer's operations might take the form of an advance in force by the right bank, leaving a minimum force to contain the Turkish army on the left bank.

Aylmer replied to my proposals in a telegram to Army Headquarters, repeated to me, which confirmed my impression that he did not believe he could relieve me even when his expected reinforcements did arrive. This telegram, dated 23rd February, referred to my telegram containing the above proposals, as follows:—

"I know Army Commander disagrees with me, but I must again affirm that in my opinion, as previously expressed, and as confirmed by recent experiences, I am not in a position to reach Kut so as to effect entire relief of Townshend. I believe, even after reinforcements now on their way arrive, we shall have very little chance of success. I have now only 9,000 infantry left and have just suffered reverse. I am

very doubtful of *moral* of a good many of the Indian troops, especially as I have now the gravest suspicion of extent of self-mutilation amongst them. It is my deliberate opinion, formed after the gravest consideration, that the best course would be to adopt Townshend's plan, as suggested by me originally and vetoed by Army Commander.

"If this plan 'A' is now sanctioned, I require earliest possible information, as I must cancel arrangements now under way for sending down all available ships, which I must retain in order to carry out plan 'A,' and effect my own retirement when this is done. Details only would be arranged between Townshend and myself. All ships now being sent down with wounded should be returned instantly with troops to Sheikh Saad, or later to Ali-al-Gharbi, so as to assist difficult task of my retirement from this position, where I am in actual touch with enemy and have a most difficult road to follow on both banks, owing to recent flood.

"Reference Townshend's 69.113.G of to-day, I have already expressed my opinion, these columns seen by him do not necessarily indicate deductions from force in front of us. They are much more likely reliefs, Townshend not being shown troops going the other way."

On 24th January, I informed Aylmer that I was quite willing to make the attempt to break out by the right bank, but it must be understood that the enterprise was entirely dependent for success on luck; if the Turks discovered that I was crossing the river

at night it would be bound to fail. I was of the opinion that the plan suggested by the Army Commander that Aylmer should advance in force along the right bank, leaving a minimum force on the left bank to contain the enemy there, offered more certainty. The Shatt-al-Hai River was now a very formidable obstacle, and the enemy would be very careful of putting a large force on the right bank east of the Shatt-al-Hai, with the chance of Aylmer throwing them into it. The enemy had only one crazy mahela bridge over the Shatt-al-Hai. I pointed out that, though I had nominally only twenty-two days' food left, still by commandeering all the grain and flour in the town and eating the horses, I could hold out much longer, though there was the difficulty of feeding the Arab population of 6,000. Perhaps the Commander-in-Chief in Mesopotamia could obtain more troops from India so as to ensure our relief. In regard to sources of food outside my army rations, we had wheat atta for 34 days for the troops and 33 days for the town's people. The oil mills would work for 30 days more. In addition we had 2,400 maunds (80 tons) of barley in the town, and 11,000 maunds in the wool-press village, occupied by us on the right bank. We had 3,000 horses and mules available for food. This question of the horses and mules I had not brought forward till then, as I should not have been justified in killing the horses, and so rendering the division inefficient for service in the field, until Aylmer had told me that he did not think he could relieve me. Euro-



peans would eat the horse-meat. My assistant director of supplies had for some time past been purchasing wheat atta in the town, and the Military Governor had been feeding 600 indigent Arabs, every day, who had no money to purchase food, and he had been selling grain purchased by us at Government rates from the Arab merchants, to 3,000 Arabs daily, at a low rate. On wheat atta alone, including the 22 days' rations I had in hand, we could live for 34 days longer still, which was not counting barley meal and horse-meat.

I concluded by saying that, when the enemy discovered that Aylmer was marking time and waiting for reinforcements, he would in all probability make a supreme effort against me, taking troops from in front of Aylmer. I repeated this telegram to Army Headquarters.

The great business of a siege is the food question, it is all-important, and is always a severe problem. The fighting usually is secondary in importance to the food. It was the same in my defence of Chitral, it was accentuated at Kut, and in consequence I have divided the periods of the defence into three—the first period “on full rations”; second “on half rations” and third “on starvation rations with great hardships.”

Telegraphing to Aylmer on 25th January, regarding breaking out by the right bank and the meeting of his column with mine, I said that the meeting of the two columns on a compass bearing was quite uncertain, but his column could have instructions to fall back again if they did not see mine. I repeated

that being able to cross the river to the right bank at Kut was merely a matter of luck; the covering party that landed first would certainly have to drive away snipers and patrols, who were at work along that bank night and day. Given a successful crossing, I should make for Musjid (Imam Munsur, five miles south-east of Kut town) which is a conspicuous landmark indicating the road to Sheikh Saad, its bearing  $105^{\circ}$  east from Kut town. There was also no doubt it was occupied by an infantry outpost, which we should perhaps have to rush, but the Turks kept bad watch at night. I did not consider the Turkish mounted troops or their commander, Subri Bey, as at all formidable. I knew they would keep at a respectful distance if I could manage to bring a couple of 13-pounders with me. The crossing of the river without detection was most difficult and "success lies in that difficulty alone."

I said also that: "In the defence of a place a general is expected, when no further hope of relief remains, to try to cut his way out with what men remain with discipline and good hearts. It is a duty that the general owes to his country. He has to leave his wounded and sick to the mercy of the enemy, who, when civilised, respect them (and the Turks have always acted well in this respect). But with a swollen river on all sides except one, and that side flooded and impassable, this is a good example of the difference between theory and practice, and desert Arabs in hordes on your flanks and rear remind one that the theory applies rather to Europe than here.

"But it is a terrible thing for me to leave behind the wounded and sick and so many weakly men, who have all trusted me. Government knows how they have fought under me, and now I am going to abandon them like a thief in the night. I know my first duty is to try to save able-bodied men to the Government, and I was the first to tell you and Sir John Nixon that I would attempt to cut my way out if you were repulsed. As you will remember I said that as a desperate necessity only I would cut my way out, or endeavour to do so.

"I hope you will confer with the Army Commander before the thing is finally settled, that you cannot appear before us by a *coup de main* on the right bank, when you get your reinforcements. I should consider Subri Bey, with his mounted troops, and possibly two battalions, no obstacle at all. Kemball will tell you how I disposed of Subri Bey, by a night march and attack at Kutunie, when he and his force bolted at dawn just as I got to him.

"I do not see why we should not hold on here for another two months, as my food wire will have shown you yesterday, in which case Army Commander could call troops from India or even Australians from Melbourne.

"The Turks will be very chary of trying to rush me after what they have received here already, and they have now a practical example of what loss they can inflict on you from behind their beloved trenches. The Turk is mediocre as a fighter in the open, but formidable behind a wall or trench. The divisions

in front of you are the same as fled when we closed with them at Essinn, last September, and the same as at Ctesiphon, but it was of course because their flank was turned and we attacked in columns on fronts of not more than 600 or 700 yards a brigade.<sup>2</sup>

"I hope you will weigh the matter well with the Army Commander. Remember my being able to cross the river without detection at night is, I may say, the case of spinning a coin."

It will be seen that the Army Commander favoured my plan "A," that I should endeavour to break my way out on the right bank; in conversation with my second in command, General Melliss, when showing him the proposals I had made, he expressed the opinion that my second "B," was the best, for by breaking out I could only hope to get 3,000 or 4,000 men away by mere luck, and would have to leave behind 4,000 to 5,000 combatants, all my wounded and sick, destroy guns, etc., and he thought that our best course and duty to the Empire was to carry on, and so hold up the Turks.

To my mind there was no doubt which was the correct course—to cut my way out with all available combatants when all hope of relief was past, and this I would most certainly have done, but the local conditions made the operation impossible, for we were surrounded on all sides but one by an impassable

<sup>2</sup> I believed that Aylmer's infantry were very greatly extended in his fighting at Sheikh Saad and Umm-al-Hannah, in which case there could have been no weight in his assaults. Hence the cause of the failure.

river, making it very problematical as to whether I could get even 3,000 men across in the given time. Under those circumstances Melliss was right. I thought out the matter all that night, and decided by morning that breaking out by the right bank was such a touch-and-go, such a risky matter, that possibly would end in a real disaster, that I would stand by my proposal "B"—to hold on at Kut whatever happened.

This resolution was still further strengthened by the fact that large stores of concealed grain and food stuffs had just been found in the town, my orders for a house-to-house search having borne fruit. My staff informed me that I could hold on now for 84 days. I said that I would make Kut a second Plevna, and accordingly sent the following telegram to Aylmer, repeating it to General Headquarters, on 25th January:

"I have carefully thought out the situation, and wish to sum up my ideas and give you my views and the conclusion I have come to.

"Para. I. (*a*) Not only is breaking out a pure question of chance, a spin of the coin, owing to having to cross river undetected at night, but in case of success I can only extricate some three thousand odd combatants, leaving five thousand behind, exclusive of wounded, sick, and all guns.

"(*b*) By thus doing, Kut falls at once, and this lets the Turks immediately take the offensive down the Tigris, for so long as I resist at Kut they cannot get their ships, munitions, stores, etc., past me.



“(c) You could not remain where you are or you would share my fate. You would have to retreat in a hostile country and I doubt if you could remain at Amarah, while Nasiriyeh would most likely be surrounded and fall.

“(d) Thus we lose all the territory we have gained in last year’s campaign, and it becomes disastrous and inglorious. It is for (b), (c) and (d) above that I arrested my retirement from Ctesiphon and made a stand at Kut. It was my own decision.

“(e) While I hold Kut the Russians from Kasr-i-Shirin can seriously menace Baghdad.

“Para. II. I have now placed all food in the town under Colonel Annesley, my Assistant Director of Supplies, collected all the foodstuffs and rationed inhabitants. I now find that we can last for 84 days.

“As regards food supplies, great stores of barley have been discovered. Besides all this I have 3,000 animals to feed on.

“Para. III. As regards the want of *moral* of a good part of your Indian troops, I have the same here in a more modified form; it is my handful of Norfolks, Dorsets, Oxfords who are my sheet-anchor here.

“We do not want inferior drafts of Indian recruits from India, such as my battalions were filled up with after the battle of Kut-al-Amara, in September last. Melliss, Delamain, Hamilton, and Hoghton will bear me out in this. One or two good all-British divisions are what we want.

“Now is the time to demand good white troops

from overseas—an army corps to save and hold Mesopotamia, if Government considers it worth holding. The Germans knew that Mesopotamia and not Egypt is the best avenue of approach to India, and that is why all these German officers are here now. I take it Mesopotamia is worth holding, and we shed much blood to gain thus far.

“Para. IV. I repeat I think the Turks will not have the heart to leave their safe trenches and overwhelm me in my trenches and houses. They would lose terribly at that game, and have lost heavily when they tried to do so.

“Para. V. The floods will arrive, I suppose, in February; this will compel the Turks to recede and the side with most gunboats obtains the sea-power, which enabled me to take Amarah last June.

“Para. VI. The more I think out the situation, the more convinced I am that the best and highest rôle I can play is to follow the example of Osman Pacha at Plevna, where his defence held up the Russian advance and saved Constantinople.

“In the same way the defence of Kut will save the whole of the Basra province. It will give the Army Commander time to get solid reinforcements and render the campaign a glorious one instead of letting it end in disaster.”

Aylmer quickly agreed with these views, for I at once received the following telegram from him to Headquarters, repeated to me.

“It must be acknowledged that Townshend’s num-

bers 69.117 and 118.G throw a completely new light on the situation.

"I am delighted that his food supplies are now found better than I could know from previous telegrams, which pointed to February 17th as the date to which he could subsist on half-rations.

"I quite recognise that there are other factors beside food with which he may have to contend in his splendid defence; but this new information, had it been communicated to me before, would have certainly modified much that I have unsuccessfully attempted to do and what I have proposed.

"I certainly no longer desire to adopt Plan 'A.' "

On 26th January we saw what we estimated at a division moving eastward from the Turkish camp above Kut on the right bank, evidently in order to cross the Hai, in the neighbourhood of Mhairiyah, where they had mahelas moored, and, we supposed, a crossing, for we had seen men working there and taking timber and piles to this place. I supposed the destination of this division was the Essinn position on the right bank.

I informed Aylmer of the above, and also explained the reason why I did not bring up the food question before:—

"(a) There was no necessity to do so until the question as to whether I could be relieved or not arose. The question was that I was to be relieved by 10th January, because, after that date, by the Corps Commander's own appreciation of the situation, there

would be a danger of large Turkish reinforcements reaching Baghdad, and so making my relief impossible. I have ample rations to last over that date. Thus I do not see in what way Aylmer's action would have been modified had he known I had so much food.<sup>3</sup>

“(b) The Arab population in Kut is 6,000, distinctly hostile to us and for the Turks. Such numbers in our midst are a positive danger, and I have to keep a considerable force of military police to watch them by day and by night. I have searched houses for arms. I did not want to search for food until obliged, as will be easily understood. I knew there was much food in the town, but not so much as we discovered.”

I now heard that Aylmer's reinforcements amounted to 11,000 bayonets, 18 field guns and 6 howitzers, plus 4 Territorial Artillery field-guns. These reinforcements would raise his force to 20,000 bayonets, 1,300 sabres and 74 guns. They were expected to have reached him by 7th to 10th February.

The amount of casualties in the 6th Division from 3rd December, 1915, when it entered Kut, to 26th January, 1916, amounted to 2,225, which total did not include deaths from disease.

On 26th January I issued the following *communiqué* to the troops:—

“The Relief Force under General Aylmer has been

<sup>3</sup> The business of a relieving force is to relieve a besieged garrison, and not to prolong a siege.

unsuccessful in its efforts to dislodge the Turks entrenched on the left bank of the river, some fourteen miles below the position at Essinn, where we defeated the Turks in September last, when their strength was greater than it is now. Our relieving force suffered severe loss and had very bad weather to contend against. They are entrenched close to the Turkish position. More reinforcements are on their way up river and I confidently expect to be relieved some day during the first half of the month of February.

"I desire all ranks to know why I decided to make a stand at Kut during our retirement from Ctesiphon. It was because so long as we hold Kut the Turks cannot get their ships, barges, stores and munitions past this place, and so cannot move down to attack Amarah. Thus we are holding up the whole of the Turkish advance. It also gives time for our reinforcements to come up river from Basra and so restore success to our arms; it gives time to our allies, the Russians, who are now overrunning Persia, to move towards Baghdad. I had a personal message from General Baratoff, commanding the Russian Expeditionary Force in Persia, the other day, telling me of his admiration of what you men of the 6th Division and troops attached have done in the past few months, and telling me of his own progress on the road from Kirmanshah, towards Baghdad.

"By standing at Kut I maintain the territory we have won in the past year at the expense of much blood, commencing with your glorious victory at Shaiba, and thus we maintain the campaign as a



glorious one instead of letting disaster pursue its course down to Amarah and perhaps beyond.

"I have ample food for 84 days, and that is not counting the 3,000 animals which can be eaten. When I defended Chitral some twenty years ago, we lived well on atta and horseflesh, but, I repeat, I expect confidently to be relieved in the first half of the month of February.

"Our duty stands out plain and simple. It is our duty to our Empire, to our beloved King and Country, to stand here and hold up the Turkish advance as we are doing now, and with the help of all, heart and soul with me together, we will make this defence to be remembered in history as a glorious one. All in England and India are watching us now and are proud of the splendid courage and devotion you have shown. Let all remember the glorious defence of Plevna, for that is what is in my mind.

"I am absolutely calm and confident as to the result, the Turk, though good behind a trench, is of little value in the attack. They have tried it once, and their losses in one night in their attempt on the Fort were 2,000 alone. They have also had very heavy losses from General Aylmer's musketry and guns, and I have no doubt they have had enough.

"I want to tell you now that, when I was ordered to advance on Ctesiphon, I officially demanded an army corps, or at least two divisions, to perform the task successfully. Having pointed out the grave danger of attempting to do this with one division only, I had done my duty. You know the result,

and whether I was right or not; and your name will go down to history as the heroes of Ctesiphon, for heroes you proved yourselves in that battle. Perhaps by right I should not have told you of the above, but I feel I owe it to all of you to speak straightly and openly and to take you into my confidence. God knows I felt our heavy losses, and the sufferings of my poor brave wounded, and I shall remember it as long as I live. I may truly say that no General I know of has been more loyally obeyed and served than I have been in command of the Sixth Division. These words are long, I am afraid, but I speak straight from the heart, and you see I have thrown all officialdom overboard. We will succeed; mark my words. *Save your ammunition as if it were gold.*

“(Signed) CHARLES TOWNSHEND,

“Kut-al-Amara.

*Major-General.*

“26th Jan., 1916.

Commanding 6th Division.”

It will be seen that in this *communiqué* I had conveyed bad news, and at the same time endeavoured to animate the defence by taking all into my confidence. It had a most excellent effect on the garrison. The Brigadier-Generals told me of the fine spirit it had aroused in the troops. I received messages from Indian officers, indicating their absolute devotion—notably in the case of the 7th Rajputs, the Indian officers of which battalion went to their C.O., Colonel Parr, in a body, and asked him to write to me as follows:—

“They would like me to know how pleased all the

regiment was at receiving my *communiqué*. They say that 'we never had any anxiety about the situation, and we should like the General to know that we are with him to the last breath.'" This incident alone will show how the *communiqué* appealed to the Indian troops. The wounded in hospital quickly told me during my evening visits how the British part of my force regarded it.

On the same date another Turkish division was seen marching eastward by the right bank past Kut, evidently to operate against Aylmer's troops. All moves on the part of the enemy, it goes without saying, were communicated at once to the Relief Force by our wireless.

Sir Percy Lake wired me on 27th January from "Camp": "I am always glad to have your ideas, and your suggestions are most valuable, whilst your undaunted spirits are most encouraging.

"Aylmer was making arrangements last night to cross all available infantry to the right bank by steamer, leaving 3,000 on the left bank to contain the enemy in front of him with 26 guns and bulk of cavalry brigade. Thus 6,000 infantry and 20 guns will be on the right bank."

This explained the move of the Turkish division reported on 26th January, as moving east by the right bank. I felt grateful to Sir Percy Lake for his kind message, and I thanked him, telling him he could rely on us.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE DEFENCE OF KUT: SECOND PHASE

AT the end of January began what I call the second phase of the siege, with all the troops on half-rations. Effectives on 27th January numbered 8,356 combatants, of whom 6,430 were infantry. If I include combatants in hospital, men of the Field Ambulance and Medical establishments and the Supply and Transport Corps, the total was 10,513 men. In addition we had 2,908 native followers, which made the total mouths to feed 13,421.

The casualties of the siege up to 28th January were 2,240.

As regards S.A. ammunition I had 756 rounds per rifle on 28th January, for 7,100 rifles. For a statement of gun ammunition, of which I still had an adequate quantity, see Appendix to Part IV.

On 28th January we noticed that a Turkish division was taking up a position between the Dujailah Redoubt, at the extreme right flank of the enemy's Essinn position, and Mhairijah on the Hai River, marked as Atab on some maps. This was the commencement by the enemy of a series of redoubts to connect the Hai River with the Dujailah Redoubt, and so make it one with the Essinn position.

I was anxious to find out the strength of the investing troops, as my mind was given up to co-operating with Aylmer when he should advance, either by attacking the Turkish force on the left bank as it retired past Kut, or by an assault on the main camp at Shumran up-river, where the enemy's steamers and stores were. I saw no use in making efforts which were not in combination with Aylmer. I suggested to G.H.Q. that the Indian chiefs in India should be asked by Government to send a message to the Rajputs, Mahrattas, Sikhs and Dogras with me—as I considered that it would encourage the men to receive a message, and so help the defence.

At the end of January the river began to fall. On the 28th and 29th it dropped four inches on each day. The inundations had practically isolated the Fort, and I had thoughts of abandoning it when the floods washed us out of our first line of defence, but I decided to hold to it, as it formed a *débouché* for a sortie eastward along the left bank, if I desired to make one in that direction.

I took extraordinary measures of vigilance and precaution with regard to the guarding of my magazines of ammunition. I had placed them in separate buildings in the town as a precaution against the Arab inhabitants, instigated by the Turks, whose spies got in and out of Kut with ease, by swimming the river at night. And I took similar precautions with the supplies. Major Cotton was placed in charge of the fire brigade, and I instituted an organ-



ised system among the civil population for putting out fires.

On 3rd February, I received a telegram from the Viceroy of India, forwarded by General Headquarters from Basra: "Following gracious message has been received from H.E. the Viceroy. Begins:

"Please transmit following message from me to General Townshend.

" "The bravery and endurance with which you and the troops under your command have resisted the attacks of the enemy have excited admiration of all, and I am confident resistance will be maintained until help reaches you in the near future. India thinks of you and your troops all the time." "

This message from the Viceroy I published to the troops.

On 5th February a telegram from G.H.Q. informed me of the contemplated dispatch of the 13th British Division to Mesopotamia. From its number I knew it must be one of the newly raised "Kitchener's Army" divisions, and I had read in one of the back numbers of "The Times," dropped into Kut by aeroplane, that it had suffered very severely in the Gallipoli peninsula, where it had some 4,000 casualties in one action. It was not likely, I thought, that it would be at full strength. G.H.Q. said it was not clear if this division was intended to be in addition to or in lieu of the three brigades (i.e., one division) promised from India, but the Army Commander had strongly urged that it should be in-addi-

tion. No dates, I observed, were mentioned for the arrival of these reinforcements, though the Army Commander had urged immediate dispatch.

Scurvy now made its appearance amongst the Indian troops. Colonel Hehir, the A.D.M.S., had long expected it, for the Indians, with the exception of the Gurkhas, would not eat horseflesh. All vegetables had given out, but I had ordered seed to be planted in the gardens on the northern front of the town to supply the needs of the hospital in this respect.

I have mentioned before that the enemy had completely and thoroughly invested us with innumerable trenches, redoubts, barbed wire entanglement, etc., on the north, north-east, and north-west fronts. They were now busy digging redoubts and trenches on the right bank of the Tigris east of Kut, evidently to prevent our co-operation with Aylmer's approach on the right bank, for his move of the bulk of his troops to that bank was the cause of the enemy's activity on it. In addition to the Turkish division which was working on the section from the Dujailah Redoubt to the Hai River, along "Turks Ridge," another large column, estimated at a brigade of infantry and a field battery, was discerned on the morning of 6th February, moving from the Hai bridge towards Essinn. I thought it must be part of the division I had reported on 26th January, which was to dig itself in along "Turks Ridge," to resist a possible turning manœuvre by the British operating on the right bank.

I received about this date a "Times Weekly Edition" of 10th December, dropped by aeroplane with a few other papers. They all had accounts of the battle of Ctesiphon and the retreat to Kut.

On 6th February, General Aylmer wired me his plan for relieving us. It was as follows:

As soon as sufficient reinforcements arrived—about the middle of February—his present intention was to advance up the right bank of the Tigris by a night march with his Principal Mass, leaving enough troops to contain the Turks in the Hannah position. Probable numbers of his Principal Mass would be 12,000 bayonets, besides strong artillery and cavalry brigades. He would endeavour to defeat the Turks in the Essinn position or wherever found. His available land transport only permitted him to carry one day's food, besides what was carried on the man.<sup>1</sup> Whatever happened, my co-operation to the fullest possible extent was essential, but the way in which it would be best ensured must depend on the developments of the next ten days. Alternative methods should at once receive my most careful consideration.

Case A. If his success was not sufficiently pronounced, he intended to follow the enemy across the Hai and endeavour to defeat him again wherever he stood, making for his ships and bridge. He referred to my telegram of 5th February, in which I stated that the enemy was now throwing up investing works on the right bank east of Kut, rendering it impos-

<sup>1</sup> The transport question was crippling him just as it had crippled me in the Ctesiphon operations.

sible for me to cross until Aylmer's advance had removed the blockade. I could then cross my maximum available force, with such guns and machine-guns as I could get over quickly, to assist him in further operations, as suggested in Case A.

Case B. In case Aylmer succeeded in driving the Turks across the Hai, it was quite possible that even with my resistance he might not be able to get any further. Then he would hold the enemy back whilst I deliberately crossed the Kut garrison to the right bank, including sick and wounded, who would be transported back to his present position. The Army Commander had sanctioned Aylmer in requiring me to do this, if, in his opinion, the circumstances necessitated it.

In Case "A," in which a temporary weakened garrison would be left at Kut, I might have to construct inner entrenchments in the event of my first line being forced by greatly superior numbers. In Case "B" several such entrenchments would be absolutely essential, even with Aylmer's resistance by enfilade fire, to enable me to extricate the garrison, as the enemy would be certain to press the attack on the north front directly my withdrawal was pronounced.

Many other arrangements would naturally occur to me; I should at once put all such arrangements in hand.

In Case "A," during Aylmer's attack and before I was able to cross, I could assist him by artillery fire on the enemy's flank if the enemy moved within the zone of effective fire, either in the retreat or in at-

tempting to send forward reinforcements. I must make arrangements for this.

It would also be essential for Aylmer to obtain rations at Kut in either of the cases, and I must be prepared to cross these rations to the right bank directly I could get across. I must let him know very soon what I could give him in this way. I must consider the possibility of crossing such supplies beforehand to the Liquorice Factory, which would suit for Case "A" and possibly for Case "B" if we included it in the line we could hold.

"As regards bridges," Aylmer said, "it is impossible for us to bring up by land with us in the first instance the material you require for a boat-bridge over the Tigris. So it is thus out of the question. We have wire cables and two runners suitable for flying bridges over the Tigris or lesser width.

"Have you also got any? Can you construct two or possibly more rafts with superstructure for flying bridges and prepare material for landing-stages? You could possibly erect two on left bank and one on right bank at Liquorice Factory in anticipation.

"Each raft might be made out of two small mahelas.

"In Case 'A,' we shall endeavour to take a very light trestle bridge for the Hai, suitable for infantry in single file and as many Wheatley bags, waterproof sheets, and tarpaulins as possible for crossing in rafts. Except these we shall depend on fords or being able to seize enemy's bridge at Mhairijah. As



these means are somewhat sketchy and uncertain, could you possibly get enough material, in addition to rafts and landing stages, to construct a bridge over the Hai near Kut, after we join hands? Material of otherwise unserviceable mahelas might possibly be used for this. Without previous bridge over Hai near Kut, in Case 'A,' the two or more (if you have material) flying bridges would assist transfer of men and supplies from one bank to another. Your advice is required as to where they should be established. If you cannot possibly make a bridge over the Hai, one of the flying bridges might be made across it.

"In Case 'B' the flying bridges will be essential for transfer of garrison and guns. In Case 'A,' if Turkish force now there will not move from the Hannah position, it is possible the enemy may transfer so many of his troops from Shumran to the right bank against us, that action on your part with maximum available troops may be advisable on the left bank so as to fall on his camps and ships at Shumran, instead of joining us in our advance beyond the Hai on the right bank. It is also possible that in other eventualities action on your part on the left bank may be necessary, with or without our direct co-operation.

"You should prefer a scheme for this also."

I replied on the next morning, 7th February, as follows:

"Para. 1. I shall of course endeavour to co-operate with my maximum strength on whichever bank my action is directed. On principle my maximum

force would be three weak brigades, one other being left as minimum force to hold Kut defences with the bulk of the artillery.

“Our artillery in their present positions in our defences can co-operate with your advance on the right bank, and its firesweep, to assist your approach towards the Hai, south of the town, will be improved.

“Para. 2. I have already another line of defence behind the one I occupy now, and the defences of the outer walls of the town will be improved. Floods compelled me to abandon my first line of defence on the north-west section.

“Para. 3. You will observe by my former telegrams that I do not consider it possible to cross the Tigris to the right bank, i.e., to that portion of it east of the Hai. The enemy has placed more troops there and is digging in hard. The operation could not be carried out at night without detection and it would probably be a disaster. When you arrive opposite Kut I could then start crossing the river.

“Para. 4. I should assist your passage of the Hai by action from the Liquorice village on the west bank of the Hai; in order to do this I should reinforce the present garrison of the Liquorice village by night, by means of the ferry<sup>2</sup> up to two brigades and should of course co-operate with your advance along the right bank towards the Turkish camp.

<sup>2</sup> The *Sumana*, with a barge attached, was the ferry which crossed to the Liquorice village and returned under cover of darkness for the purpose of relieving the garrison there, conveying rations, wounded, etc. This ferry could gradually put two brigades in the Liquorice village.

"Para. 5. I note your instructions *re* the sick and wounded and supplies to be placed on the east bank of the Hai, since the Liquorice village is on the west bank of that river, i.e., the side nearest the enemy and well within range of his guns. See my telegram of 22nd December *re* the time taken to cross troops, sick, wounded, supplies, etc., but rafts will of course accelerate matters.<sup>3</sup>

"Para. 6. I am going into the matter of rafts and landing stages.

"Para. 7. I have already considered the project of attacking the Turkish camp on left bank (at Shumran) should that be necessary, and to this end I have had ramps made for crossing trenches.

"Para. 8. It all depends whether your success is a pronounced one or not. If you soundly beat or destroy the force against you on the right bank there will be a general Turkish retreat. You can turn him on the right bank, and to deal with a turning move-

<sup>3</sup> It was impossible for us to establish a bridge over the Tigris, owing to want of roadway planks. Wood-work and piles would not hold in the swift current and mud that formed the bed of the river. The current was a four or five knot one, and the Tigris some 500 yards broad. All work would have to be done under the enemy's artillery fire, which would become active and violent both by night and day at the first sign of the bridge being made. The enemy's investing trenches, manned by their troops, were one to two hundred yards from the Liquorice village, and attained the river banks of the village upstream of it. They had trenches at the mouth of the Hai downstream of the village; and their trenches ran all along the right bank of the river from the mouth of the Hai eastward, downstream. Thus it will be seen in no way could secrecy be ensured. A constant exchange of rifle fire went on all day between the snipers of both sides, and the passage of the *Sumana* ferry at night was always greeted by a heavy fusillade.

ment he would have to quit his entrenchments; and then the Turk is no use.

"But 12,000 rifles seems a small maximum force out of 20,000. Surely one brigade entrenched on the left bank is ample to hold the Turkish force at Hannah in respect. If you have any doubt as to the result, would it not be wiser to wait and unite all your forces before advancing, particularly with regard to the 13th British Division? If this effort fails it will be a grave affair. I remember your remarks *re* state of Indian troops with you after two indecisive actions and a severe reverse. Moreover, if you relieve us with large forces there will be no need to think of leaving Kut.

"I do not think the Turks can possibly take Kut as long as you are face to face with them down river, and if the Russians are seriously menacing Baghdad, and are successful Erzroum way, I do not see how any more reinforcements can be sent down the Tigris from Baghdad. However, you are the best judge.

"Please do not mind my offering suggestions without being asked for them. Our position here is a serious one, and I am anxious you should not fail again. You can imagine how anxious I am; I have had a continual strain on me. Since I advanced from 'Amarah in September last, the whole of the operations have been on my shoulders, and you know how ill I was when I left Simla to conduct the advance on Kut-al-Amara.

"But I am quite well and cheery, and no matter

how desirous we are of being relieved, it is better that you should make certain of doing it."

A wire from G.H.Q. on 7th February, addressed to Corps Commander, and repeated to me, showed me that Aylmer was apparently not going to await the arrival of a brigade of field artillery, on its way up to reinforce him, since bad weather might postpone its arrival; also that the 13th British Division from Egypt would not begin to arrive at Basra till the end of February, and no considerable portion of it could reach Aylmer by 15th March, even if the additional river-craft, due in Mesopotamia by the end of February, admitted of its transport and maintenance. G.H.Q. also estimated that a fresh (sixth) Turkish division might reach Baghdad about 22nd February, and a seventh was due about 12th March. I well knew that the Turkish reinforcements arrived in much quicker time than our Intelligence calculated.

In the Appendix to Part IV, I insert leaves from my own operation order book to show the different plans I drew up for co-operation with the Relief Force in their next attempt to relieve Kut. My custom is to write down my operation orders briefly in my own book. It is then taken by my General Staff, worked into regular operation orders, and then returned to me. I carry out the same procedure in action or on the march—that is, I indicate my tactical decisions briefly in writing, and my General Staff promptly issue them in the shape of operation orders. When time does not admit of writing, I dictate the orders necessary.



On 7th February, I was informed that the 13th British Division would embark in Egypt on the 10th and was expected at Basra about 2nd March. I wired to Sir Percy Lake to ask the Commander-in-Chief in India to consider my name for command of this new corps (the 13th British Division, plus the three brigades coming from India), as Sir John Nixon had recommended me for command of a corps when he left Mesopotamia, and I was the next senior to Aylmer in that country.

About this time it was reported to me by the G.O.C., 30th Brigade, that the Afridis of the 24th Punjabi Infantry were deterring the other Moham-medan troops from eating horseflesh, which in order to combat scurvy it was so necessary for them to eat. How much I regretted that these trans-Border men had been employed in Mesopotamia, how much worry did I suffer on the account of these—in my opinion—greatly overrated troops! As regards fighting, I found this class of Indian soldier distinctly mediocre. They were not nearly so good against modern artillery fire as the hitherto despised Bombay native infantry, who showed brilliant qualities in this campaign. I asked General Aylmer to bring these facts strongly before the notice of Army Headquarters, India, repeating my telegram to General Headquarters. General Aylmer entirely endorsed my opinions on this class of troops, and asked if the trans-Border Pathans could not be all returned to India or sent to East Africa. I also recommended that the Moulvi of Delhi should be asked to send a message

advising the Mohammedan soldiers with me to eat horseflesh in the siege, and I suggested also that the Sikh, Dogra and Rajput authorities should send a similar message.

The time was drawing near for Aylmer's second attempt to relieve Kut. He hoped that the enemy would not be in excessive strength at Essinn, and he had decided to await the arrival of the 13th Brigade, R.F.A., portions of the brigade ammunition column, and 1,450 British infantry details. A similar push, on a larger scale, with a turning move when big reinforcements arrived, he thought was prohibited by the question of the land transport necessary for such a movement, unless our big reinforcements were bringing a large amount of transport, which would doubtless delay their arrival. He referred to the information from G.H.Q., that there was a possibility of large reinforcements reaching the enemy before he could start his push to relieve Kut, and should the chances of success become indifferent, it must be dropped.

He considered that the only course open to the Relief Force if this push failed, was to continue the attack on the Turkish entrenchments at Hannah, on the left bank, from all possible directions, and to assault it as soon as the 13th British Division arrived. In other words, if the turning movement failed to relieve Kut, the frontal attack would be adopted. The subsequent operations would be up both banks and close to the river, so that the 13th Division, and in great measure the Indian Division, should not be

delayed by the question of land transport. He asked for a second bridge, which should be transportable by land, and as many steamers, barges and mahelas as possible.

I was now busy on a dyke to protect the town from the floods when they should arrive, and the enemy was trying to upset my Arab working parties by opening heavy bursts of artillery and musketry fire at night. I must say that the effect on the Arabs was considerable, but the work progressed nevertheless.

There would be a difficulty, I found, in feeding Aylmer's force when it arrived. Our mill ground barely enough flour for the daily consumption of my garrison at Kut, and it was uncertain whether it would hold out. On the other hand, if Aylmer's whole force advanced methodically it would bring its own food with it.

On 12th February telegrams from G.H.Q. to Corps Commander were repeated to me, which altered my ideas regarding the advantage of waiting for the arrival of the 13th British Division and the expected Indian Division before Aylmer made his effort to relieve Kut.

(a) G.H.Q. warned Aylmer that it was not safe for him to assume that either the 13th Division or the new Indian Division would be able to reach him in time to take part in any operations designed for my relief.

(b) The arrivals of additional river-craft, G.H.Q. pointed out, were not keeping up to forecast, and it

was extremely doubtful if either division, complete, could be transported to Aylmer before the end of March at the earliest. Infantry units with minimum transport would be pushed up as soon as possible.

(c) The date of the arrival of the 13th Brigade, R.F.A., and portions of the brigade ammunition column, were to be wired later, but its transport by water would involve some delay in the despatch of Indian details.

G.H.Q. also gave reasons for and against Aylmer's postponement of his advance. Under the heading "In Favour of Postponement," it was stated that:

(d) Aylmer would be reinforced by 18 guns and 450 British Infantry, who were doing escort to the guns on the march.

(e) There were 3,500 Indian details at Basra to join battalions in Aylmer's force and fill up gaps, and over 2,000 Indian details, mostly for units in Aylmer's force, were expected at Basra, about 18th February; 1,000 British infantry details for units in Aylmer's force and 500 horse and field artillery details were due from England about 14th February. A large proportion of the above could be sent up by 25th February, and though there might not be time to incorporate all into their units, they would be available for bridge-head guards, and to prepare and occupy a second defensive position at Wadi or Sheikh Saad.

(f) The leading units of the 13th Division should be arriving at Basra between the 25th and the end

of the month. They would be pushed up to Amarah in support.

(g) It was pointed out that postponement would give rather more time to arrange for Russian pressure to be exerted towards Kermanshah, though "there is no reason to anticipate anything very effective in this direction at present."

As arguments "Against Postponement" G.H.Q. put forward:—

(h) Enemy's possible reinforcements. According to latest information it appeared that, in addition to the 35th, 45th, 51st, 52nd and 2nd Divisions already arrived, a sixth division with 24 guns might arrive at Kut by the middle of February and a seventh with 12 guns by the end of February.

(i) Additional time would be given to the enemy to still further strengthen his defences, particularly on the right bank, should Aylmer's main concentration on that bank become known to the enemy in advance.

(j) It might also give time to the enemy to improve his means of communication across the Tigris below Kut, and across the Hai. G.H.Q. added that the Army Commander did not wish to sway Aylmer's decision either way, as he felt that Aylmer, being on the spot, was best able to weigh the pros and cons.

I did not at all like the idea that neither the British Division nor the new Indian one could be counted on to arrive in time for any operation for the relief of Kut. All who were under my command had one



hope—to hear of the arrival of all-British troops, for the Indian troops cannot be compared with the British, even when those British were soldiers hastily raised and improvised under the name of “Kitchener’s Army.”

As regards (*e*) I knew that the value of the Indian details would not amount to much, if they were of the same stamp as those who filled up my gaps after the battle of Kut-al-Amara. Nor did I like the idea of troops being installed in “a second defensive position at Wadi or Sheikh Saad.” That smelt of a violation of Economy of Force, for to place a tactical reserve twenty miles behind the battle amounts to nothing else. Every man was wanted to win the battle on the right bank. Of course, if some of these details were to be used to contain the Turks in the Hannah position on the left bank, it was another matter. I had very little hope in para. (*g*). The Russians were wandering about Persia like “a camel without a nose string,” as the Afghan would say. Small columns were occupying towns for political reasons. There was no sign of a Russian Principal Mass being directed on Baghdad.

As regards paragraphs (*j*), the Turks were evidently aware of Aylmer’s project, as they were strengthening the Essinn position and connecting the Hai and the Dujailah Redoubt with a chain of entrenchments and redoubts. This paragraph was being carried out by them also.

The approaching floods would greatly affect the situation. Already G.H.Q. were putting all avail-

able Indian details on to making an above-flood-level road from Kurna to Amarah; the politicals had impressed all possible Arab labour for this work; and G.H.Q. were asking Aylmer if he could spare sappers and miners to bridge breaches, and were asking him for suggestions for keeping it open from Amarah to Wadi throughout March.

The Army Commander agreed with Aylmer that, unless he got a favourable opportunity for his push on the right bank, "the only alternative is to await maximum reinforcements that can arrive within Townshend's limit of holding out." Where now was my promised relief within two months? Our reinforcements always seemed to arrive too late, while the Turkish ones arrived on time. That which I feared when I first arrived at Kut and asked for relief in a month, as otherwise it would not be possible to extricate me, appeared likely to come true. I was now very anxious, though none of my staff or my command had the slightest idea of it, and the result was that I telegraphed to G.H.Q., repeating it to Aylmer: "If the relief of Kut is to be carried out, it must be done as soon as possible by as strong a force as possible."

I pointed out to Aylmer in another wire that I believed that the desert route from Sheikh Saad to Kut was always open, even in flood time. I thought it was the best one to take, as he could do it in one march, and the Turks at Essinn would have to leave their trenches to oppose him; thus they should be easily beaten by him. Finally, the same amount of

land transport would do as by the route he proposed to take. I added that the Turks were now throwing up entrenchments along the west bank of the Hai, from the point where it falls into the Tigris, at three or four hundred yards' distance from the river bank. At present these entrenchments only extended about half a mile along the Hai. I told him that the Turks seemed to anticipate everything we arranged, although they could not have our present cypher. But it was understandable that Turkish spies went in and out of Kut amongst the Arab population as they pleased. It was only a case of swimming the river in a *mussak* on a dark night. And no doubt there were a lot of spies or so-called friendly Arabs with Aylmer's force.

On 13th February also I wired to General Headquarters, confessing that I was very anxious about the news of the impending arrival of two new Turkish divisions and 36 guns. It had altered my views in regard to Aylmer waiting for reinforcements from England and India, for I was of the opinion that if two more divisions installed themselves it would not be possible for me to be extricated. I thought that Aylmer should come as soon as possible with a good maximum force, not under 14,000 rifles, with the extra field artillery brigade mentioned. If he took the route from Sheikh Saad to Kut (25 miles), I thought he would beat the Turks well, for they had no entrenchments on that road, and are no use out of them. It would be most regrettable to have to evacuate Kut, but it would be better than having my

force taken, for it would have as bad an effect as the fall of Cornwallis at Yorktown. The authority of the information as to the arrival of the two new Turkish divisions was the British Military Attaché with the Russians. He would only get such news as the Russian General chose to give him, and the latter might be misinformed, just as our General Headquarters were, before my advance on Ctesiphon, in regard to the strength of the enemy.

A telegram was received on 13th February from the Chief of the General Staff, Delhi, about the eating of horseflesh by Indian soldiers. "Please inform Townshend that he can quote the Imam Jumma Musjid, Delhi, as saying there is no objection to Mussulmans eating horse in stress of war provided it is 'halaled.'<sup>4</sup> Leading Pandit, Delhi, says there is no objection to Hindus eating horse. Both authorities are willing to give written statements to this effect. We will get you similar authority from leading Granthis as soon as possible."

The enemy's aeroplanes now began to be active—as will be noticed in the following extracts from my diary:—

"13th February. A German monoplane came over the town and dropped five bombs in the morning and ten more in the evening on the two trips he made. Several of them fell close to my Headquarters.

"I asked the Corps Commander to let his aero-

<sup>4</sup> The Mohammedan "halali," that is, cuts the throat of, any animal or bird before he eats it or prepares it for food.

planes bomb the Turkish main camp and hangar in retaliation.

"The enemy again opened fire on the town at 9.30 p. m., with his guns, and there was a sharp burst of musketry in front of the Woolpress Village and our north-west section. Our casualties, however, were only ten on this date.

"14th February. The German monoplane flew over Kut at 5.30 p. m. and dropped five bombs without result.

"At 9.30 p. m. the enemy's guns fired thirty to forty shells into the town, resulting in fourteen casualties to us."

On 15th February, the enemy's guns, including a newly arrived quick-firer battery, opened on the town and fort at 5.45 p. m. and were at once engaged by ours, but "we are absolutely outgunned by the enemy, and there is no doubt of it. Our 5-inch guns are utterly out of date and their rate of fire painfully slow, the enemy's 12-centimetre guns getting off rounds three times as quickly. So slow are our heavy guns here—about one round in ten minutes—that I generally see no use in firing them. My experience of them in the four operations I have conducted out here is a fairly wide one, and I will never take these useless guns anywhere I may command in future. They are only fit for the scrap heap." (Quotation from my diary.)

Our machine guns, installed on the roofs of the



houses, soon had the effect of making the German aeroplane fly high over Kut.

On 16th February the following message from the King-Emperor to me, transmitted through General Sir Percy Lake, was communicated in a Special Order to all ranks.

“I, together with all your fellow-countrymen, continue to follow with admiration the gallant fighting of the troops under your command against great odds. Every possible effort is being made to support your splendid resistance.”

My answer to the Secretary of State ran as follows:—

“It is hard for me to express by words how profoundly touched and inspirited all ranks of my command have been by His Majesty’s message.

“On behalf of my command—that is to say, Royal Naval Detachment, the Sixth (Poona) Division, all ranks of the British and Indian Units composing it, and of the troops attached, including Territorials—I hope you will convey to His Majesty that the knowledge that we have gained the praise of our beloved Sovereign and our fellow-countrymen will be our sheet-anchor in this defence.”

On 16th February, with reference to questions of replacing inefficient troops in the Relief Force, I suggested to Sir Percy Lake that a leaf might with advantage be taken out of Napoleon’s Correspondence

in the matter of posts in the line of communications, which might well be held by convalescents, instead of using trained troops for this purpose. In my advance on Kut-al-Amara in September, 1915, I had garrisoned posts with convalescents. Thus, in the post at Sannaiyat, convalescents, commanded by a convalescent officer, held in respect 2,000 mounted Arabs with two Turkish guns, who menaced them during the time that I was fighting the battle.

On 17th February I received the following wireless message *viâ* Basra, from General Baratoff, at Kasvin: "General Townshend. *Je suis heureux de partager avec vaillant corps d'armée Anglaise à Mesopotamie la joie de la prise de Erzroum par notre armée.*"<sup>5</sup> To this I immediately sent the following reply:—

"General Baratoff, Kasvin. *Remerciements pour votre dépêche. Sommes tous enchantés de la prise de Erzroum qui joue rôle stratégique et politique de la plus haute importance dans l'empire Ottomane. Félicitations de ma part et de mes camarades ici aux braves Russes.*"<sup>6</sup>

In the latter half of February, the enemy, who had been reinforced up to some 30,000 men, still held the Hannah position on the left bank in force, about 10,000 men being entrenched there. Further in rear

<sup>5</sup> "I am happy to share with the gallant English army corps in Mesopotamia the joy of the capture of Erzroum by our army."

<sup>6</sup> "Thanks for your message. We are all delighted by the capture of Erzroum, which plays a part of the highest political and strategical importance in the Turkish Empire. Congratulations from myself and my comrades here to the brave Russians."

of Hannah (i.e., up river towards Kut) were other defensive lines at Felahiyeh, Sannaiyat, Nakhailat, and along the northern part of the Essinn position. All these positions, except that of Essinn, which dated from my battle in September, 1915, had been constructed since Aylmer's first repulse in the battle of Hannah, on 21st January, by direction of Von der Goltz and his German staff. All were protected on either flank by the Tigris and the Suwaika marsh. On the right bank, on which Aylmer had decided to make his push to relieve us at Kut, the Essinn position constituted the Turkish main line of resistance, with an advanced position at Beit Aiessa, a ruined mud hut on the right bank. The right flank of the Essinn position was supported by the Dujailah Redoubt, about five miles south of the Tigris.

Aylmer had decided to attack the Turkish right flank at the Dujailah Redoubt before the arrival of the flood season, expected about the middle of March. It was feared that as soon as the Tigris came down in flood, the Turks would cut the "bunds" or dykes, and thus flood the country, rendering further offensive operations impracticable. The whole area was so flat that hardly any portion of it could safely be said to be above flood-level.

General Aylmer decided not to wait for further reinforcements, but to advance with the maximum force available—five brigades, for which land transport carrying two days' food and water could be made available. He intended to use two more brigades, practically without transport, as a minimum force to

demonstrate along the right bank against the front of the Essinn position, and thus minimise the danger of a counter-stroke. He said that before delivering his push he must have several sunny days to dry up the country after the heavy rain so that the columns of transport might be able to move across this country by night.

If he could see a prospect of getting two more brigades within a reasonable time, he said that he might decide to await their arrival, which was, however, problematical. He said it was clear that the bulk of the two divisions from Egypt and India could not arrive before high Tigris, although individual units might do so. Therefore, he must conclude that the two divisions must be regarded as not available for the relief of Kut.

This was all most unfortunate, and the arrival of the troops in packets, instead of the advance of a united army corps, was a clear violation of the principle of Economy of Force.

Much of the unfortunate situation was due to the first repulse of the Relief Force in its attack on the Hannah position, on 21st January, when the enemy were only lightly entrenched and Aylmer's force was in superior numbers with plenty of ground to manœuvre over. Now we were all paying for this defeat. I find the following comment in my diary on 18th February:—

“It seems to me that I had better kill a lot more horses and save barley, for it will be long before we

are relieved. Probably the floods—possibly the fall of Erzroum—may relieve us.

“19th February. Last night was very quiet.” As a rule there was continuous rifle-fire during the night, especially between our garrison of the Liquorice village on the right bank and the enemy’s entrenchments, which were in places within fifty or sixty yards of the entrenched village. The garrison was very much on the alert, as it was understood that the Turks might attempt any night to rush the village. This they endeavoured to do several times, but, though all their trenches were full of men and a terrific fusillade was kept up, they could not get their men to advance across the one hundred yards of open ground.

Brigadier-General Hamilton, commanding the 18th Infantry Brigade, was wounded slightly on this day by a sniper. Luckily he was soon able to resume duty.

The German monoplane made two trips over Kut town in the afternoon, dropping bombs on each occasion and killing two or three Arabs.

On 20th February, about 7 a.m., heavy gun-fire was heard to the eastward, and shells could be clearly seen bursting in the air.

I kept my troops all day in readiness to take the offensive if opportunity offered, but the Turks made no movement, except that a small column of about 500 infantry proceeded from the camp south-west of Rumeli, on the left bank, towards Horse Shoe Marsh. About 8 p.m., the enemy fired very heavily on the



Woolpress village for three-quarters of an hour, from their trenches to the west of it, but no attempt was made to press home the attack.

On 25th February I received a telegram from General Baratoff, at Hamadan, *via* Basra, saying that, in order to shorten the distance between us, he was moving with his expeditionary corps on Kirmanshah. On 9th February, his troops occupied the Bidesourka passes, which proved strongly fortified by the Turks, who had German officers. Baratoff had also occupied Sinneh, and his cavalry were in pursuit of the enemy, who were in retreat on Kirmanshah. He had captured five guns and all kinds of war material, including telegraph wire and hand-grenades. He evidently thought that I was in command of the British Expeditionary Force in Mesopotamia, so I wired his message on to Sir Percy Lake, asking him to put Baratoff right in this matter.

I had suggested to Sir Percy Lake, on 20th February, that the Russians be asked to move a detachment from the region of Lake Van, which we knew was now in their occupation, to occupy Jezire, on the Turkish main line of communications, north of Mosul. This would have a great effect, as it would utterly disorganise the Turkish line of communications to the Tigris, and possibly force them to shift the line of communications to the difficult Euphrates valley, not to mention greatly more far-reaching effects upon their hold on Mesopotamia. Great results would be possible from such a strategic turning movement against their main line of communications;

and we should be most effectively helped in the attainment of our objective.

About 20th February, General Aylmer computed the strength of the Turks around and down stream of Kut as follows:—

At Hannah	7,000 to 10,000	Infantry.
“ Essinn	8,000	“
“ Kut	8,000	“

The arrival of a new division, he estimated, would bring them up to 32,000 men. He was sure that the Turks had anticipated his advance by the right bank, as they had strongly entrenched a line from Sinn Abtar Redoubt—3 miles due south on the Tigris—echelonned back for two miles to a strong redoubt which they were digging on a mound. The Turks had also constructed a bridge-head on the north side of the Hai, at the point where their bridge crossed that river.

I thought that on whichever bank Aylmer beat them, the Turks on the opposite one would run also. In support of this theory I gave the example of my battle in September, 1915.

Before making his push by the right bank, Aylmer evidently thought he would have another try at the Turkish position at Hannah on the left bank. I can understand his wish to do so. A successful assault on this position at early dawn meant the Turks in head-long rout towards Kut with Aylmer on their heels and me sallying out to attack the retreating enemy as they passed. If only that attack of Aylmer's on 21st

January had succeeded, the result would have been a splendid victory, for the Turks would have had no heart left, and my force still had plenty of fight in it.

On 21st February, when returning from a visit to the second-line entrenchments, I met a messenger with a wire from Aylmer, to say that he had made arrangements to carry out at dawn on 22nd February a surprise operation on the Hannah position, the objective of which was to inflict the maximum amount of damage to the enemy in his main camp behind the position, by bringing enfilade, frontal and reverse fire to bear on it with every available gun. Practically the whole force, he said, would take part in the operation, and he anticipated some success. "It is possible that the enemy may be induced to vacate his position, in which case I shall follow him up." He asked me to be ready to take the offensive against the Turks if they retreated or against reinforcements going eastward from Shumran.

On 21st February I received a telegram from the Military Secretary, that the War Office had agreed to the appointment of Sir Wilfred Peek as my A.D.C. This rejoiced me very much, but alas! it was not to be. Peek joined the relief force shortly before Kut fell, and was unable to join me. At the termination of our retreat from Ctesiphon I had sent my A.D.C., Captain Bastow, of the Yorkshire Regiment, who had been with me throughout the campaign up to the siege of Kut, for a trip to India, so that he might throw off an attack of dysentery. Thus Bastow, who

served me well and is a gallant and good officer, luckily escaped the siege and our subsequent fate.

The result of Aylmer's attempt is described in my diary as follows:—

“22nd February. Heavy gun-fire about 7 a.m. to the eastward. We could clearly see the shells bursting over Hannah, and the smoke, although the distance must be fully twenty miles. Apparently much confusion was caused in the enemy's main camp behind the Hannah position; but they did not retreat. As is the Turkish custom when defending earth-works, they held on like grim death, their officers, revolver in hand, behind them, shooting if any man tried to get up and go. Aylmer wired to me that a certain amount of movement from east to west could be seen at Hannah. But nothing more came of this.” Several other passages in the diary refer to the desertions, which about this period of the siege became prevalent among the Indian troops. “A Mohammedan sepoy of the 119th Infantry, who shot the jemadar adjutant of the battalion dead yesterday, was tried by Court Martial and sentenced to death. I confirmed it and ordered sentence to be carried out at the Fort at sunset to-day. Another Mohammedan sepoy of the 66th Punjab Infantry deserted last night (21st February), and also a third, of the 120th Infantry, quartered in the Liquorice village on the right bank. Two Punjabi Mohammedans of the 76th Punjabis also deserted. This all happened on the night of 21st February.”

On the night of 22nd February, as soon as it was dark, a heavy attack was made by the enemy on the Liquorice village. The fusillade was so heavy as to recall to me that of the night attack by the Turks at Ctesiphon. The terrific fire was kept up for three-quarters of an hour, but evidently the Turks could not make up their minds to rush into the open and carry the village with the bayonet, and eventually the fire died out.

Aylmer conducted three more bombardments, but short ones, against the Turkish position at Hannah, but I gathered that they had no more effect than to cause the Turks to dig deeper, and with redoubled energy. A travelling Jew trader gave intelligence to the Corps Headquarters on the same day that there had been a revolution in Constantinople on account of the murder of Prince Yusuf uz ed Din, that 100,000 troops were under orders for Baghdad, and 17,000 Germans, said to have arrived at Mosul, had been recalled to Constantinople.

On 26th February, I wired to General Headquarters, with reference to my despatches of the battle of Ctesiphon and subsequent retreat to Kut, to ask Sir Percy Lake to allow my general instructions to subordinate commanders at the battle of Ctesiphon "to remain in the report and not in the appendices, because these instructions give clearly the reasons for everything I did, and so there would be no questions afterwards. These instructions show that I acted on the accepted principles of war and that the failure to destroy the Turkish forces and occupy Baghdad was



due only to the fact that I had only a division to do it with, which was no fault of mine, for I pointed out officially at Azizieh the danger and unsoundness of attempting such a task with only one division. Having pointed this out, I then did my duty in carrying out an order which had little chance of success, and which from want of numbers was one of the most difficult operations in war that I know of in modern history."

The bombardment of the Turkish camp behind the Hannah position continued, several devices being tried to induce the Turks to man their trenches or show themselves in the position, with a view to catching them with our artillery. It sounded much like the homely proverb of putting salt on the bird's tail, but I did not understand the use of it all. Guns by themselves never yet made an enemy quit an entrenched position.

I received a wire from Aylmer on 26th February, giving his final instructions as regards his attack on the Essinn position.

Six brigades were to make a night advance from his advanced position at Umm-al-Uruk on the right bank, going due south till they were due east of enemy's Sinn Aftah—Dujailah Redoubt flank. One brigade was to demonstrate from his advanced position at Uruk towards the south-west against the front of the Essinn position. Two brigades out of the six were to attack at dawn the enemy's flank, Sinn Aftah to Dujailah Redoubt. Two brigades would march round the enemy's flank to take the reserves in the rear. Two others would follow in reserve to assist

them, or to take on army reserves moving up from Shumran over the Hai bridge or by any other route.

"The method of your co-operation," he said, "must depend on local conditions, as you must be the best judge; but the following points are for your consideration: Your heavy guns to fire on hostile forces trying to cross the Hai bridge; lighter guns to fire on any hostile troops offering good targets within your effective range, thus limiting area in which Turks can manœuvre on the right bank; the crossing of a brigade by mahelas, if you have favourable opportunity, and then direct co-operation in battle. Sortie to north of Kut if enemy withdraws so many of his troops as to give you favourable opportunity. My attack will take place in eight or nine days."

My answer to the Corps Commander, which was repeated to General Headquarters, was sent on 29th February. I told him that I should endeavour to co-operate with two brigades and two 4-gun field batteries.<sup>7</sup> This was the largest Maximum Force I dare take out of Kut, owing to the danger of a determined assault by the Turkish containing force, leaving the two remaining brigades as the smallest possible minimum force to hold the defences of the town. I determined to begin to cross as soon as I could see General Aylmer's turning attack coming round to the south of the Dujailah Redoubt, for, if the turning at-

<sup>7</sup> The 30th and a provisional brigade made up of the British battalions (Norfolks, Dorsets and Oxford L. I.). This would leave Delamain's, Hoghton's, and Hamilton's brigades, less their British units, to hold the Kut defences, and they would have all the artillery, less eight guns.

tack did not materialise and General Aylmer were repulsed, my sortie force crossing, and the portion that had already crossed, would be annihilated, as there would be no means of retreat. The enemy had guns behind the trenches on the right bank opposite my only possible crossing place where the flying-bridges could work, and infantry in the trenches.

The operation of crossing the Tigris with the means at our disposal would take some eight hours to accomplish.

General Aylmer knew all the difficulties and delays of my crossing, which were so great as to make my co-operation of little practical use.

General Aylmer estimated the enemy in the Essinn position in front of him at 8,000 men only.

I pointed out that, once he had taken the Essinn position, Kut would be automatically relieved, since the enemy could not remain under the crossed long-range gun-fire of Aylmer and myself, and nothing could prevent me from advancing across the plain from Kut by the right bank, once I had crossed the river, and joining him when I wanted to.

I was much concerned at my means for crossing the river. Two flying-bridges, two or three rafts, the *Sumana*, and a barge made it a most difficult problem to cross with any rapidity. I could not begin the flying-bridge preparations till Aylmer was engaged in battle, or it would show the enemy what was intended. "If I cross at night there is no concealment in the terrain on the right bank (even if I could cross unobserved) and I should be overwhelmed on that bank

before you could arrive. My engineers declare it will take three hours to fix up the flying-bridge, and a further two hours for small mahela flying-bridge. Divisional Engineer Commander says that not more than 150 men an hour could be crossed by the flying-bridges."

All I could say was that I would cross as fast as I could, as soon as Aylmer's turning force came into view. I noted all he had to say about my gun-fire and informed him I would concentrate twenty-one guns to sweep the zone south of Kut. I was not certain if our big guns could reach the enemy's mahela bridge over the Hai. I would ascertain with Bar Strand rangefinder at once and let him know. When they first started a bridge over the Hai we opened fire on it and made them shift further south. I afterwards regretted having fired and disturbed them.

A lot of cheering was heard in the enemy's trenches at 6 p. m. on 28th February. I supposed it was the usual German fairy-tale of victory in France to soften the news of Erzroum and Kirmanshah.

On 1st March the casualties of the defence force from 4th December to 1st March amounted to 2,929.

The enemy bombarded Kut heavily in the afternoon of 1st March, with twenty-one guns. At the same time three German monoplanes cruised about over Kut and dropped about forty bombs, but though it was the heaviest bombardment we had yet undergone we suffered a loss of only nine killed and twenty-eight wounded. Our improvised anti-aircraft gun and machine-guns were of practically no

use, the aeroplanes flying about over us with impunity. The troops were furious with the German aviators, as their especial aim seemed to be our hospital. This was the great covered-in bazaar marked with hospital flags on the roof.

If one of the German pilots had fallen into the hands of my troops he would have been torn to pieces. It was not fear of their bombs, for everyone treated the aeroplanes as a joke, running to cover at the last moment with shouts of laughter. But the victims were often women and children and our poor wounded in the hospital.

About this time there were persistent rumours that the Turks were about to use poison gas against us. It has always been a wonder to me that the German High Command, with their traditions of the Napoleonic wars and 1870, could have introduced this horror into manly warfare.

The use of poison gas is a cowardly barbarism worthy of Chinese pirates, from whose use of stink-pots I suppose the excellent German inventor borrowed his idea. Owing to several rumours I issued gas-respirators to the troops in the north-west and north-east sections of defence on 4th March. Stores of them had been sent up to Kut about the time I advanced from Azizieh against Baghdad. There had been persistent rumours that the Turks had been provided with this weapon, and I had to take precautions.

I received a wire from General Baratoff at Hama-dan, dated 29th February. His troops had entered



Kirmanshah on 12th February, and were met by the Governor, who was followed by the population. "I am perfectly convinced that we shall be able very soon to meet and shake hands in Mesopotamia." I sent a reply in French thanking him for his telegram, which I had announced to my troops in an *ordre du jour*. I too hoped soon to shake hands with him in Mesopotamia.

By 5th March I had sent the whole of my despatches of the Ctesiphon operations and retreat to Kut to General Headquarters, by wireless. I added that Sir Percy Lake was doubtless aware of the unfortunate and unavoidable delay in the submission of the Ctesiphon despatches, and on behalf of all ranks of the 6th Division and units attached, I most respectfully urged that every effort should be made to expedite the publication in the Gazette of the distribution of awards to officers. I said that there was, and had been throughout the operations, a belief that we had suffered professionally in comparison with our comrades in the European theatres of war, who in many instances were being promoted over our heads, simply because the despatches of their operations were promptly published and promptly rewarded. I knew that in my own case several Major-Generals junior to me in the army had been promoted to Lieutenant-General over my head, although these officers had not had an independent command nor such great responsibilities as I had; and the same applied to the Generals commanding brigades in my command. Much more so then was this the case with

regard to the field officers of units in my command. None of my Lieutenant-Colonels had been promoted to higher commands, except Colonel Climo, whom I had strongly recommended twice for promotion, giving him temporary command of a brigade in the actions of Kurna, Kut-al-Amara, and Ctesiphon, in which last battle he had been severely wounded. On the other hand, the Naval officers serving in the Flotilla in the operations under my command had been rewarded on the spot, so to speak, for the Kurna-Amarah and Kut-al-Amara operations; and I now saw in the papers that they had received rewards for Ctesiphon. Lt. Tudway, R.N., who was locked up in Kut with me at the time I made this request and whom I had recommended for the D.S.O. for his work in the boats during the retirement to Kut from Ctesiphon, had actually received his reward in the Gazette.

On the evening of 4th March, Aylmer wired me that owing to bad weather he must postpone the push for 24 hours; that the attack would now take place on the morning of 7th March. Luck seemed against us all the time. Again on 5th March, I received another wire to say that owing to weather conditions he had to postpone operations a further 24 hours! The attack would now take place on the 8th. These delays were very unfortunate, as they gave time to the enemy to continue their construction of trenches, closing the gap between the Dujailah Redoubt and the Hai River—and the most essential thing was the taking of the Dujailah Redoubt.

Throughout the siege the weather conditions were entirely in favour of the Turks. Never had commander worse luck than General Aylmer in this respect; he had only to project an attack for driving rain and a regular gale to arise, wash away his bridge, and make the ground like a pudding, rendering it impossible for his troops to march or move the guns.

On the night of 4th-5th March, three of the mahela crews—Arabs—escaped by swimming the river. They informed the Turks of the rafts and flying bridges we were making and keeping as secret as possible. This was evident from the fact that, on the morning of 5th March, reinforcements of Turkish troops could be seen to be occupying the new entrenchments on the right bank opposite Kut town where I was going to attempt my crossing. I informed Aylmer of this, and added that I should still endeavour to cross to the right bank in order to co-operate with him in the battle, but, as he himself had said, local conditions would largely govern my actions. It was quite possible that, when the direction of his attack was discovered, an attack would be made by the investing force at Kut on the north-west or north-east front of my defences in order to contain me in the town. This attack might be a containing one to be changed into a decisive one if Aylmer's attack were repulsed. And again, the Turkish force at Hannah might be brought westward along the left bank to co-operate in an attack on Kut by the investing force.

In order to deal with circumstances as occasion demanded, I was grouping my force into three.

Two secondary forces or groups were to hold the north-western and north-eastern fronts under General Delamain (N.-W.) and General Hoghton (N.-E.). With my Central or Principal Mass (30th Brigade under General Melliss and a provisional brigade under Colonel Evans, composed of Norfolks, Oxfords, Dorsets, 22nd Punjabis and 24th Pioneers) I should take up a central position in the south-eastern outskirts of Kut town, whence, by uniting this mass with either of the two above-mentioned secondary forces, I could effectively deal with any decisive attack by the enemy on either the north-western or north-eastern avenues of approach. In this central position, I was also conveniently situated for my attempt to cross the river. I was installing the bulk of the guns south of an imaginary line drawn east and west through the Brick Kilns, so that I could concentrate artillery fire to the south-east and east; the big guns were arranged for action towards the Hai bridge, partly on the enemy's camps in rear of the Essinn ridge. At the same time the guns could be quickly shifted by taking them through the town to positions north of it, to concentrate their fire on the north-westerly or north-easterly fronts as required.

Although all the entrenchments at Essinn and from the Dujailah Redoubt to the Hai looked and sounded formidable, they were not so in reality, for on the right bank at Essinn, from the Dujailah Re-

doubt to the Hai, were some thirteen miles of trenches, and there were only 8,000 Turks to hold this extent of front. At least two army corps would be necessary to hold such a front under ordinary circumstances. I pointed this out to Aylmer, saying that, in reality, far from being strong, the Turks were weak everywhere in this position, and that Aylmer's attack should easily break through.<sup>8</sup> The new trenches from Dujailah to the Hai could not be formidable. The fact that they had entrenched between Dujailah and the Hai showed that the Turks did not dare to use a general reserve in the open to counter-attack Aylmer's turning attack, which was the proper way to deal with his movement.

The engineers attempted to float a mine down the Hai on the night of 6th-7th March, with the object of blowing up the enemy's bridge. But it was a failure, for it stuck at the mouth of the river on a sand-spit and blew up with an appalling explosion during the night.

From 5.30 a. m. on 8th March, I held in constant readiness the force which I intended to use in co-operation with the Corps Commander on the right bank. At 7.10 the first sound of gun-fire was heard in the direction of the Essinn Ridge and the Dujailah Redoubt.

About 8.30 there was a lull in the fire. Flocks of

<sup>8</sup> Sir Percy Lake's dispatch giving an account of the failure of the Relief Force at Essinn, clearly stated that prompt and energetic action in the attack would have carried the Dujailah Redoubt. But three hours' delay occurred to let the guns register. This gave time for Turkish reinforcements to be sent to that point.



sheep were being driven along the right bank towards the Hai bridge, and a good deal of transport moved in the same direction from the Sheikh Imam Musjid.

At 9 o'clock a haze began to rise, and by 11 observation towards Essinn became impossible, though the Hai bridge was still visible.

From 2 till 4 p. m. sounds of very heavy musketry were heard, with an occasional burst of gun-fire. About four o'clock a heavy bombardment of the Dujailah Redoubt commenced, and lasted till nearly five.

It had been apparent to me by eleven o'clock that the attack on the Dujailah Redoubt had failed, for all fire died away for some hours. The turning attack which was to have come round Dujailah to the southward never put in an appearance at all, and I came to the conclusion that Aylmer's effort against Dujailah must have absorbed all the troops he had with him in what was practically a frontal attack.

At 12.10 p. m. I received a message from General Aylmer that the enemy were sending their reserve from Magasis to the Dujailah Redoubt, which was putting up a stubborn resistance to his attack. His aeroplanes reported that about 1,000 men were crossing from the left to the right bank at Magasis by the ferry. The enemy's reserves from Shumran were moving towards Hai, where they reported 1,500 men.

He asked what my news was, and what steps I was taking to co-operate.

I sent an answer by wireless that I should begin to cross when I saw his turning attack developing south

of Dujailah, and I asked where this turning attack was and what was its progress. I informed him that we were watching Shumran carefully, and no reserves had gone to Hai bridge except about three squadrons of cavalry, while 200 infantry had gone eastward by the left bank.

At 5 o'clock I received a message from Aylmer that up to the present he had failed to take the Dujailah Redoubt, but a final effort was to be made at 5 p. m. At that time the haze began to lift, and bodies of Turkish infantry were seen moving from behind Essinn Ridge towards Magasis. A bombardment of the whole Turkish position started at 5.30, and about 5.45 a heliograph to the north-west of the Dujailah Redoubt appeared for a moment to be calling us up, but we failed to establish communication.

At 8.30 p. m. a heavy burst of artillery fire was visible at the Turkish camp at Magasis. It looked as if British shells were dropping into the camp, and the Turks' gun flashes in reply could be plainly seen.

I began to think that the attack on the Dujailah Redoubt must have been successful, though I was surprised not to hear from Aylmer.

At 11 p. m. the Corps Commander sent me the following, which I received at midnight:—

“Enemy lost heavily to-day, and it is doubtful whether they will be able to maintain their position. Will let you know to-morrow proposed plan, which will include English Division; which has now arrived.”

This still left me in doubt as to whether he had taken the Dujailah Redoubt or not. In fact by mentioning a "proposed plan" it would appear that he was going to prepare fresh operations. I knew, of course, that the English Division could not have arrived so soon.

At 9.30 a.m. on 9th March, a telegram from the Corps Commander reached me by aeroplane:—

"To-day's operations terminated in a gallant but unsuccessful attempt to storm Dujailah Redoubt. Troops pushed home and carried out the operation with great gallantry, but the enemy was able to mass reinforcements, which arrived from the left bank at Magasis and from Shumran, and we were unable to break through. Unless the enemy retires from his present position on the right bank, which does not seem probable, we shall be unable to maintain ourselves in present position owing to lack of water, and unless the enemy evacuates the Sinn position to-night we shall be obliged to withdraw to our previous position at Wadi.

"Casualties to-day have been heavy."

The above was followed by another message to say that the telegram I had received at midnight of 8th March was a bogus message which had been sent because there was a grave suspicion that the enemy had our cypher. General Aylmer said that he had been unable to break through to relieve me and that he might have to withdraw to Wadi on the morrow, but

he hoped to make another attempt before long and to relieve me at an early date. The enemy had lost most severely and their repeated counter-attacks had been repulsed. This message had been written at 1.45 a. m. on 9th March, and was also despatched by aeroplane.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE DEFENCE OF KUT: THIRD PHASE

**I** IMMEDIATELY took measures to kill off about 1,100 animals, which would save my grain and enable me to hold out till 15th April. I wired to Aylmer, saying:—

“I hope you will convey the gratitude of myself and my command and sympathy to you and your force for their gallant efforts to relieve us.

“I should like to make it clear to you again, as I told you on 8th March, that the only reserves which went east from Shumran and Essinn on the right bank were a regiment of cavalry which I saw leave Shumran myself, and watched it cross the Hai bridge, and 200 infantry along the left bank, counted by the observers at the Fort as they passed, well in sight.

“That you did not execute the projected manœuvre round the south of Dujailah with four of the six brigades, which I had to see appear before I committed my sortie force to crossing the Tigris, was due, I suppose, to your aerial reconnaissance report of the approach of reserves from Shumran. Many mistakes are made by young officers observing from aircraft up at a great height; in this country it is difficult to judge numbers, and the difference between men and



cattle in the field, even by experienced officers—let alone the extra height of 4,000 feet up. Such a mistake delayed me one day during my advance on Ctesiphon, as Kemball can tell you.

“Up to 11.30 a. m. on 8th March, practically no reserves from Shumran passed the Hai on the right bank or our Fort on the left bank going east, and at that hour thick haze shrouded the whole country like a sea-fog. But had they left Shumran after 11.30 a. m., they could not possibly have reached your field of battle in time to take any part in it. I am now going to kill off animals to enable us to continue our task of holding up the Turkish advance at Kut. By killing off 1,000 animals at once and reducing British troops’ loaf from 12 to 10 ozs. and Indian troops’ to 10 ozs. flour meal and 4 ozs. barley for parching per diem, I can make my present stock of barley last till roughly 7th April.

“As I told you, however, I am entirely dependent on my mills, the stores and engines of which keep giving trouble and anxiety and require careful nursing by that able officer, Wingfield-Smith, Royal Flying Corps, who manages all this for me.

“British troops will have to exist entirely on bread and horsemeat, and Indian troops on meal, parched barley and ghi, all other articles of rations will be finished, even on a reduced scale, by 15th March.”

In continuation of the above:—

“Of these 1,100 animals I am killing, I may say that if put down in India now they would require

six months' rest before being able to do a hard day's work. I propose keeping about 1,300 animals, of which about 900 will be required for meat up to 7th April, but those remaining alive on that day will be utterly incapable of work.

"My troops are ready to live on short rations, but they will become weak, and desertion amongst the Indian troops will increase. I hope that the next effort will be with such a maximum force as will make an absolute certainty of success. This suspense is hard to bear; it breaks down the health and depresses. To all men and to all people uncertainty is intolerable.

"Twice now I have promised the men that relief was at hand. I ought to be relieved before 7th April, unless there is some truth in the Turkish peace proposals mentioned in Reuter's, in which case our relief may possibly settle itself in this way. Perhaps Baratoff may be induced to press his advance on Khanikin and seriously menace Baghdad, by which he would relieve me automatically. I suppose that he has difficulty in the way of transport; still, he should be called on to help."

On 9th March I received a telegram from Field-Marshal Viscount French: "Watching your work with keenest interest. Best wishes." An aeroplane also dropped letters from my wife and some of my friends at home, written in January, one being from Sir James Willcocks, who, I was sorry to hear, had no longer a command in France.

On 10th March I received a telegram from Aylmer,

saying that he had arrived back safely at Wadi on the evening of 9th March. The enemy did not follow him up to any extent, and he ended by saying he was sending me another wire to-morrow as regards future plans.

Also I received a telegram from Army Commander to Aylmer, repeated to me, asking for proposals which Aylmer might have to put forward for future action regarding relief of Kut. He said that the next advance ought to be made after the arrival of all three brigades of the 13th Division, and, if possible, one of its artillery brigades. Reinforcements of river-carts were arriving at Basra, and, if Aylmer returned promptly the rivercraft he had, the above troops should reach him in sufficient time for further effort. All details for this should be carefully prepared. He asked Aylmer if he preferred a brigade of 18-pounders or one of 5-inch howitzers; he mentioned that fifteen pontoons were on their way up river to him, while 48 pontoons and 35 pontoon wagons had arrived at Basra.

On the same date I received the following letter from Khalil Pacha, the Commander of the Turkish 6th Army, Commanding Turkish Forces in Irak, and Governor of Baghdad:—

*V.E.*

10.3.1916.

*Les forces anglaises qui étaient arrivées pour vous sauver furent obligées de se retirer après avoir livré le combat de Felahieh, donnant 7,000 pertes.*

*Après cette retraite le Générale Aylmer, qui était*

*en préparation depuis un mois et demi, hier, le jour qu'il se croyait assez fort, tenta d'offenser avec le 5<sup>me</sup>, 6<sup>me</sup>, 8<sup>me</sup> et 12<sup>me</sup> brigades d'infanterie et 1 brigade de cavalerie, par la rive droite de Tigris, comme vous l'avez vu. Mais il fut encore obligé de se retirer, en donnant 4,000 pertes, et je le suis avec des forces suffisantes.*

*Quant à vous, vous avez héroïquement accompli votre devoir militaire.*

*Désormais je ne vois aucun moyen probable pour votre liberté: d'après vos réfugiés je comprends que vous êtes sans approvisionnement et que les maladies régneront dans vos troupes.*

*Vous êtes libre de résister à Kut ou bien vous rendre contre mes forces, qui se multiplient de plus en plus.*

*Veuillez agréer, Monsieur le Général, l'assurance de nos hautes considérations.*

KHALIL.

*Commandant des troupes Ottomanes d'Irak,  
Gouverneur de Bagdad.<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> "Your Excellency,

"The English forces which came to relieve you were compelled to retreat after giving battle at Felahieh and suffering 7,000 casualties.

"After this retreat, General Aylmer, who was a month and a half in making his preparations, yesterday, when he thought he was strong enough, resumed the offensive with the 5th, 6th, 8th and 12th Brigades of infantry and one cavalry brigade on the right bank of the Tigris, as you saw. But he was again compelled to retreat, with 4,000 casualties, and I am left with adequate forces.

"For your part, you have heroically fulfilled your military duty.

"From henceforth I see no likelihood that you will be relieved. Ac-

In my answer to Khalil Pacha, I wrote that on the contrary I saw much chance of relief, and I should not consider the subject of surrender. I asked if Reuter were correct about the *émeute* of Turkish soldiers at Smyrna against German officers, and also about the riots at Constantinople over the fall of Erzroum. I thanked him for his courtesy and said I was glad to find again, as I had found in my operations of Kut-al-Amara and Ctesiphon, that the Turk was always a good soldier and a gentleman.

I informed Aylmer and General Headquarters of Khalil's letter and my reply, adding that the approach of flood time for the Tigris would suggest determined efforts on the part of Khalil to take Kut, and that I was even then reinforcing the Liqueice village on the right bank with a company of Norfolks. I pointed out that the Tigris floods were expected on 16th March and therefore the effort to relieve us should be early, for I did not see how Aylmer's forces could remain where they were when the floods came. I hoped Aylmer would turn over in his mind a scheme for a grand attack with the bayonet at night on Hannah and Sannaiyat with all his

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cording to your deserters I believe that you are without food and that diseases are prevalent among your troops.

"You are free to continue your resistance at Kut, or to surrender to my forces, which are growing larger and larger.

"Receive, General, the assurance of our highest consideration.

"KHALIL,

"*Commanding Turkish Forces in Irak,*  
"*Governor of Baghdad.*"



forces united. The Russians had found this a most effective method against the Turks; but I thought he required the 13th British Division to be united with him before he made this attack. *A propos* of Aylmer's suspicion that the enemy had our cypher, I said that I did not think he had, since he had been surprised by Aylmer's attack at Dujailah on 8th March.

The effect of the repulse was soon apparent among my troops. There was a general feeling of gloom and depression, and desertion amongst the Indian troops increased; the Arabs of the town now looked upon our cause as lost. If I had not been lucky enough to find all the hidden grain at Kut we should have fallen by the first week in March.

I expected that the Turks, flushed with success, would now make another determined effort to take Kut, and I reinforced the Liquorice village on the right bank with another company of Norfolks, as I thought that the next effort of the enemy might be in that direction. Four Dekkani Mohammedans of the 117th Mahrattas deserted on the night of 9th-10th March, taking their rifles and pouch ammunition with them. I ordered Brigadier-Generals to mix Mohammedans and Hindus on all outlying picquet and outpost work and to take whatever other measures their experience of Indian troops might indicate, and I ordered a small redoubt for fifty rifles to be installed in the communication trench between B. Redoubt and the Middle Line.

My report on the defence of Kut up to 10th

March had now been sent by wireless in instalments to G.H.Q.

This last repulse of General Aylmer, coupled with the fact that General Headquarters had told Aylmer that he must not count on the arrival of either the 13th British Division or the new Indian one in time to take part in the operations for my relief, forced me to look facts in the face and to recognise that there was little hope of relief. It was certain that never would the relief force find again such favourable conditions as were offered them in the attack on the Dujailah Redoubt. The Tigris flood was expected on 16th March. It would possibly stop all relief operations, and if we were not relieved by 7th April we were practically lost, as flood conditions, in addition to the obstacles of the Tigris and the investing lines, made breaking out impossible. Famine would compel my force to surrender.

Anything was better than that we should be forced to surrender. An honourable way of evacuating Kut and being allowed to join Aylmer with all my force, guns, etc., was to be found in the example of Junot at Lisbon, with the British in 1808, and the Commandant of Belfort in 1871. In the former case at the convention of Cintra the British permitted Junot, with his 16,000 or 17,000 troops, to evacuate Lisbon with all the honours of war, arms, guns and baggage, and transported them to France in British ships. In the latter, after three and a half months' siege and the failure of Bourbaki's army to relieve it, made it apparent that Belfort must fall, the Commandant

treated with the Prussians and obtained permission to regain the French army through the Prussian lines with his arms, baggage, etc. Both these examples were very honourable negotiations, and I began to reflect on them. But in order to negotiate in this way you must have plenty of food to argue with; you must show you can go on for a long time with your resistance. You cannot argue for terms with famine looking in at you through the door as you parley with the enemy! Hence I informed the Corps Commander and General Headquarters of my views in this direction on 10th March.

I said that my objects in defending Kut on retirement from Ctesiphon were to hold up the Turkish offensive counter-stroke at the junction of the Tigris and the Hai, so as to prevent them from capturing Amarah and Nasiriyeh or reconquering the provinces we had won, and also in order to give time to concentrate and liberty of action to our reinforcements from overseas. After a three months' defence these objects had been accomplished. The Turks now dared not attack the relief force as concentrated, and the coming floods utterly precluded any Turkish advance or attempt to regain the lost provinces.

But if the third attempt to relieve me failed, Kut was bound to fall. Would it not be advantageous, I asked the Corps Commander, if, whilst he prepared the third effort to relieve Kut, I entered into negotiations with Khalil Pacha on the grounds that I should evacuate Kut and pass through his lines with arms, guns, baggage, and pouch ammunition, evacuating

my wounded, sick and baggage by steamer and barges? Such a convention would be in every way honourable, in fact, I had the example of the terms granted by the Austrians to Masséna at the defence of Genoa in 1800, and the Convention of Cintra in 1808, between the French and English.

I said that such terms would not only be honourable to my force, but I saw no disadvantage to Government in evacuating this battered village, not nearly the size of Douamont and other French villages captured and recaptured daily in the great Verdun battle. There was no chance now of the Turks recapturing the province of Basra, and Kut had never been proclaimed British territory. I thought that Khalil Pacha would be disposed to agree to such terms, judging from what he said in his letter, in which he expressed his opinion of the defence. If Khalil (or Von der Goltz) should reject them, I would neither make nor receive any further overtures. So long as my ammunition and food remained I would hold on. If Khalil were wise he would agree. I now had food for roughly a month, but by going on starvation rations I could hold out, I supposed, till 17th April. If there was any doubt in his mind as to the certainty of early relief, it seemed to me that this proposition might go before Government. If the Army Commander saw fit to act on the suggestion, I asked that it could go forward in my own words, for if such a subject as this were cut down and shortened, I said it might put quite a different complexion on my meaning and reasons.

“At the last moment,” I said, “if he still commands a disciplined body of men, who are in good heart, a general may perhaps hope to cut his way out and join the neighbouring army in the field. In doing so, if he can carry off two-thirds of the garrison that remain to him, the operation is well worth trying. But, as I said before, when invited to break out, the difference between theory and practice in this case is that we have an impassable river on three sides of us and on the land side the terrain is flooded. In addition there is a network of deep entrenchments, galleries, and communication ways that would trouble a cat to pick its way through. Moreover, we are in Mesopotamia—an Arab country, a country in which every man’s hand, and rifle, is against you. If I could get out with three hundred men only it would be great luck.”

On 11th March, Sir Percy Lake sent me a personal telegram:—“I can realise to the full, and sympathise most deeply with, the disappointment which both you and your command must feel at our recent failure to relieve you. Rest assured, however, that we shall not abandon the effort, and that for the next attempt the Maximum Force will be employed.”

This I published as a *communiqué* to the troops.

I replied in a personal telegram to the Army Commander on the same day:—“Very grateful for your telegram, which I have communicated to my command. I realise fully Aylmer’s difficulties, and I sympathise with his heavy loss of brave officers and men. I know you will relieve us if it is possible, but I think it will require the whole 13th Division united



and at least one of its brigades of artillery to do so, and I hope it will be a united force on one bank with no dissemination whatever. The conduct of my British troops here is splendid, their discipline and physique unimpaired, cheery and quite patient. I cannot say the same of all the Indian troops, i.e., the Mohammedans, and some of the Hindus also."

In answer to my proposals to evacuate Kut, if any doubt existed in the mind of the Army Commander as to the possibility of relieving me, I received a telegram on 13th March, from G.H.Q., that the Army Commander did not approve of the proposals, but had nevertheless forwarded them as they stood to the War Office and to the Commander-in-Chief in India. (This showed me that he had serious doubts as to the possibility of my relief, or why else forward them?) Even if the most pessimistic view of the possibilities of my relief were taken, said G.H.Q., it did not seem probable that there would be any advantage in starting negotiations with Khalil at this juncture. For, should the next attempt of the relief force be a failure, the effect of it would undoubtedly cancel any terms that the Turks might have offered. Moreover, it was inevitable that the fact of my having asked for terms would immediately be published abroad and this would have a very bad effect. The fact that Khalil had proposed negotiations with me indicated that he was anxious to transfer troops for operations elsewhere.

I replied on the same date that there appeared to be some misapprehension. I thought I had made it

clear that, if the negotiations with Khalil proved satisfactory, no other relief effort would be necessary, for I should march through the Turkish lines and unite with the Relief Force.

On 12th March, Major-General Gorringe succeeded to the command of the Tigris Corps, General Aylmer being superseded by the War Office. I received a private letter from Aylmer by aeroplane, in which he told me that he had been superseded and how much he grieved that he had not been able to relieve me. He had had a much harder task than most people realised. "It all looks very easy, when one sits in an arm-chair at the War Office." He concluded by most generous praise of me. "I cannot tell you how much I admire the splendid way in which you are defending Kut. I heartily pray that you will gain your reward in speedy relief. Give my best wishes to Delamain, Melliss, and Hamilton. Good-bye, and God bless you all, and may you be more fortunate than myself."

Throughout his life in the army, Aylmer always proved himself brave, loyal, just, and a good commander. He had very bad luck in this enterprise, owing chiefly to the weather conditions, which proved an insurmountable obstacle. Had he had decent weather at the beginning, he must have won a complete victory at Wadi, which would automatically have relieved Kut.

I deeply sympathised with Aylmer. I knew what a gallant soldier he was, for I had been on service with him in the frontier expedition of Hunza Nagar in

1891, when he blew in the gate of Nilt Fort and won a V.C. I doubt if the authorities at home grasped the difficulties he had to contend with in the way of floods, rain, want of transport, and last, but not least, want of experience and training in a large proportion of his troops. Of the Indian troops that formed the bulk of his force, large numbers were raw, untrained recruits. I sent Aylmer a telegram in which I tried to convey the sympathy I felt for him; I knew that his heart must be broken.

I wired on 11th March to G.H.Q., repeating it to Corps, asking them to give me an approximate date for the concentration of the 13th Division, including its artillery, with the Relief Force, and said I would do all that was possible to hold on till that date.

On 12th March a boom I had ordered to be rigged up to protect our craft, which were moored to the bank along the town, from floating mines, was in position. I ordered the Military Governor to call on the town to supply us on payment with 1,430 maunds of barley, as I had reason to believe that more grain remained hidden by the inhabitants. I threatened, if the grain were not forthcoming, to search and punish heavily where it was found.

The flood protection works, which had been carried out under the direction of the Divisional Engineer Commander, were now to be tested. The river was distinctly rising. On 11th March it rose six inches in twenty-four hours.

There was a distinct feeling of gloom and depres-

sion in the garrison at Aylmer's failure on 8th March. Serious doubt was in the minds of many, and desertions among the Indian troops increased accordingly—five more Indian soldiers, Mohammedans, three from the 67th Punjabis, one from the 22nd Punjabis, and a Havildar from the 103rd Mahrattas. The effect of a siege is demoralising on all troops, but on Indians it is especially so. They seemed to lose spirit very quickly. On the other hand the British soldier was simply splendid. The more the trouble increased, the more cheery he seemed. The effect on the Arabs of the town was, needless to say, very bad.

From newspapers dropped into Kut by the aeroplanes I had read Sir Ian Hamilton's despatches of the Gallipoli operations and knew that the 13th Division of the New Army, now coming to join our relief force, had been severely mauled on the last day of the repulse of the Allies by the Turks. It had apparently lost 4,000 killed and wounded out of a total of some 10,000 men, two of its battalions being practically annihilated. This meant that the 13th Division, if at anything like full strength, would be largely composed of raw drafts.

On 10th March I had issued another *communiqué* to the troops at Kut, as I felt and saw gloom and despondency not only in the countenances of the troops, but in those of the officers of my entourage:—

“As on a former occasion I take the troops of all ranks into my confidence again and repeat the two

following telegrams from General Aylmer, by which they will see that our Relieving Force has again failed to relieve us.

*"1st Telegram—8th March.*

"To-day's operations terminated in a gallant but unsuccessful attempt to storm Dujailah Redoubt. Troops pushed home attack and carried out the operation with great gallantry, but the enemy was able to mass reinforcements which arrived from left bank at Magasis and from Shumran and we were not able to break through. Unless the enemy retires from his present position on the right bank, which does not seem probable, we shall be unable to maintain ourselves in present position owing to the lack of water, and unless the enemy evacuates the Essinn position to-night we shall be obliged to withdraw to our previous position at Wadi.'

*"2nd Telegram—8th March.*

"We have been unable to break through to relieve you to-day and may have to withdraw to Wadi to-morrow, but hope to make another attack before long and relieve you at an early date. Please wire movements of enemy, who in any case suffered most severely, as their repeated counter-attacks have been repulsed with heavy loss.'

"I know you will all be deeply disappointed to hear this news. We have now stood a three months' siege in a manner which has called upon you the praise of our beloved King and our fellow country-men in England, Ireland, Scotland and India, and all this too after your brilliant battles of Kut-al-Amara and



Ctesiphon, and your retirement to Kut, all of which feats of arms are now famous.

"Since 5th December you have passed three months of cruel uncertainty, and to all men and to all people uncertainty is intolerable.

"As I say, on the top of all this comes the second failure to relieve us. I ask you to give a little sympathy to me, who have commanded you in these battles referred to; and who, having come to the Division as a stranger, now love my command with a depth of feeling I have never known in my life before.

"When I mention myself I would couple the names of the Generals under me, whose names are distinguished in the Army as leaders of men.

"I am speaking to you as I did before, straight from the heart, and, as I say, I ask your sympathy for my feelings, having promised you relief on certain dates on the promise of those ordered to relieve us. Not their fault, no doubt—do not think that I blame them! They are giving their lives freely, and deserve our gratitude and admiration. I want you to help me again as before. I have asked General Aylmer for the next attempt, which must be made before the end of this month, to bring such numbers as will break down all resistance and leave no doubt of the issue. Large reinforcements are reaching him, including an English Division of 17,000 men, the leading brigade of which must have reached Wadi by now, i.e., General Aylmer's Headquarters. In order then to hold out I am killing a large number of horses so as to reduce the quantity of grain eaten every day,

and I have had to reduce your ration. It is necessary to do this in order to keep our flag flying. I am determined to hold out and I know you are with me in this heart and soul.

“CHARLES TOWNSHEND,

“Kut-al-Amara.

*Major-General.*

“10th March, 1916.”

On 16th March I received a telegram from G.H.Q., dated 14th March, 1916:—

“Please tell Townshend not to make terms with Turks until he hears from me. Acknowledge.”

To this I sent the following reply on the same date.

“Kindly inform Chief India that there was never the slightest intention of any negotiation with the Turks unless there was any doubt in the mind of the Army Commander about the possibility of relieving me, and, not only that, but unless he and Government approved.

“The idea in my mind was to come away from Kut without any loss of prestige, if Kut has to fall, and to save Government humiliation. Very possibly the Turks would not give such terms, and then I would not take any others, but would stand till we were overpowered or no food left, when I should endeavour to cut my way out with those who volunteer to come with me.”

On the same date I received the following telegram from G.H.Q. “Commander-in-Chief, India, for-

wards the following extract of a wire from C.I.G.S., London. Begins:—

“‘Reference recent telegrams on subject of operations for relief of Kut. You realise, I am sure, that the successful relief of Kut, combined with a Russian success, would change the situation in the East enormously to our advantage, and indeed throughout the whole world. We should be able to send troops from Egypt to the main theatre, in fact the advantages can hardly be overestimated.’ Ends. Chief adds: ‘It would be a great help to us if Gorrings and Townshend would send their views in the form of an appreciation.’”

I complied with this request on the same day in the form of a series of notes and observations. This appreciation will be found in the Appendix to Part IV.

On 11th March I ordered 417 horses to be killed to enable the troops to last on the amount of grain available up to 15th April, and I ordered 71 artillery horses and 800 mules to be taken off the ration list and put on grass alone. The total number of animals required daily for butchery was 25; and up to 15th April, 400 horses and 600 mules were earmarked for this purpose. I hoped to save 100 of the most valuable of the officers’ chargers.

On the night of 15th-16th March, the rising river flooded the first-line trenches, including “B” Redoubt, and these had to be evacuated, thus making the “middle line” the principal line of resistance. This almost isolated the Fort, but its communication

way remained watertight. The Turks were also compelled by the floods to evacuate their first-line trenches opposite my north-westerly and north-easterly sections of defence. Accordingly they fell back—and were severely punished by our fire as they did so.

On 17th March I telegraphed to Corps, repeating to General Headquarters, as follows:—

“If Tigris rises before you can relieve me, which I do not think probable, I suppose you have considered the Sheikh Saad-Kut road by right bank, which has never been known to be closed. If water comes into the Dujailah depression as map says, you will have water after fifteen miles’ march and then could come straight into Kut. To stop such a move the enemy would have to leave his entrenchments at Essinn and come into the open to meet you, which would be what you want. This would be, I take it, the best way to do it, if it were not for the great difficulty of concentrating back to Sheikh Saad from Wadi, but you remember how Wolfe manœuvred up and down the St. Lawrence above Quebec, in ships, in order to mystify Montcalm before fixing an actual landing-place.”

On 17th March I received the following telegram from General Gorringe:—

“16th March, 10.30 p. m. Will inform you in due course of plan of operations; meanwhile rest assured that every possible effort will be made to relieve you by 15th April. We are all confident that next time

we shall win through and so enable you to bring to a successful issue your gallant defence of Kut."

On 17th March I received the following wire from Army Headquarters, dated 16th March, from Chief, General Staff, India:

" 'It is essential with reference to para. 6 of Townshend's wire that both you and I know definitely to what date General Townshend can hold out. He has changed his estimation three times and the whole conduct for the relief is materially affected by the question of date.' Ends.

" 'This has reference to your No. 69/259/G of 11th March, in which 17th April was given. The time to which supplies will last will be wired please. Repeated Corps to G.H.Q.' "

I answered on 19th March: "In my 69/292/G of 15th March I definitely gave 15th as the date. In my 68/259/G of 11th March, I gave about a month indefinitely, mentioning 17th April as the date and saying that my Staff was working out the exact date. My reasons for changing the dates are as follows: I was given first to understand I should be relieved by 10th January, up to which date and beyond I had ample supplies. When that effort failed I had to commandeer the grain in the town of Kut, on payment. The grain was found to be some hundreds of maunds short in one case when actually removed into the magazines. Amateurs at such work, we did not understand the great wastage incurred always in



cleaning and sifting grain for issue. It was the greatest luck there was any grain at all in Kut to fall back upon. This grain from the Hai district was accumulated here by merchants who owing to war had not been able to send it into Persia by caravan route as usual. 15th April is the date. I can get no more grain from the town after then."

The casualties on 18th March were 52, the enemy firing some 80 rounds into the town in half an hour, between 6 and 6.30 p.m. At 6.45 p.m. their German aviator flew over Kut in his monoplane, dropping four bombs, one of which hit the hospital, passed through the flimsy beams, boughs, and matting, forming the roof, and exploded against the wall in the main ward of the sick and wounded British soldiers. It killed six outright and wounded twenty-six, of whom fourteen died in a day or two. This naturally caused the greatest indignation on our part, and I should have been sorry for the German aviator after this incident had an accident to his machine brought him down in our lines. I cannot think he did this on purpose—in spite of later happenings in France. Nevertheless it was a remarkable fact that shells constantly struck the hospital, in spite of the flag over it. I was assured afterwards by Turkish officers that it was most difficult to see Kut town from their batteries. It was covered by a belt of palm trees, and often by a mirage or haze; and the usual range-mark was the mosque in the town, which showed above the palm grove.

I asked Corps by wireless to retaliate by sending aeroplanes to bomb the Shumran Camp, and to drop a smoke-ball over two big naval guns we could see being placed in position, so as to give us a range. This was done, and our 5-inch guns managed to dismount these guns, which, luckily for us, could never be put into action again. The enemy had begun to get much more active, and generally chose the night time to bombard us. They devoted much attention to trying to sink our one remaining gunboat, the *Sumana*, moored to the shore between mahelas to protect her, and protected by breastworks of sand-bags, etc.

The river had begun to drop again and the lake between our first-line defences and the middle line had begun to subside. There were rumours amongst the Arabs in the town that the enemy were collecting large numbers of "mashufs" up the Hai River, in order to ferry troops across the Tigris and effect a lodgment in the town. I made my dispositions accordingly, installed a search-light opposite the mouth of the Hai, and redoubled the vigilance of the 18th Brigade, in whose zone of defence the town was.

On 21st March I wired to Gorringe, repeating to G.H.Q., and expressed my disbelief in the supposed grouping of the enemy's forces between me and the Relief Force on the left bank, which showed extraordinary dissemination. "I can hardly believe that the Turkish Commander could be such a fool so to violate the principle of Economy of Force as to group one body at Hannah, one at Nakhailat, and another

at Madug, all these bodies being much too distant for effective mutual support against a blow by your concentrated mass."

On 22nd March the enemy's aeroplane flew over Kut at noon, dropping incendiary bombs and trying to hit my house. He succeeded in hitting the stables, but no damage was done, as the bomb did not act. The enemy opened a heavy bombardment with his heavy guns at 5.30 a.m., from batteries installed along his third line of entrenchments and redoubts, bringing a heavy converging fire to bear on Kut town, and paying attention only to the town. Four of these guns were firing high explosives. We opened fire in return at 6.45 with all guns that would bear; this bombardment ceased at 7.45. One of our two naval horse-boats, with 4.7 guns in each, was hit, but was beached before she could sink. The Turks continued their violent bombardment again at 8 o'clock and stopped at 9, after firing about 600 rounds. Our casualties were about sixteen killed and wounded. I reported this to Gorringe, asking if there were any sign of a retirement in front of him, as this would account for an otherwise inexplicable bombardment. I asked also if his aeroplanes had reported any move of the enemy up river. I was led to think of a possible retirement of the enemy and raising of the siege of Kut by the fact that Armenia was in danger and needed every available Turkish soldier to stem the Russian advance in that direction. Troops from Madug could easily be withdrawn in the night and marched past Kut without our knowledge, and to

cover such a retirement the besieging force at Kut would naturally bombard to take off our attention and keep us in respect.

I received an answer from Corps on the same day that the enemy's visible movements down stream of Kut all pointed to a move up the river. Gorringe was trying to find out by aeroplane reconnaissance whether they were doing so, but the indications might be a blind. This was followed by another wire at 10.30 p. m., that, as a result of the aeroplane reconnaissance, the enemy had increased their troops on both banks of the river and there were no signs of a withdrawal anywhere. Gorringe added that his bridge was almost ready for use and that the situation was quiet on both banks.

On the same date, I sent the following telegram to Corps, repeating to General Headquarters:—

“I should be glad to get an indication of which bank you intend to operate by as soon as you have decided on your project. You need not fear it will leak out as I shall take all precautions. I see that notwithstanding the greatly over-extended entrenched line from Nakhilat to Atab, practically fourteen miles (which on a European calculation would require four army corps to hold, i.e., four miles to an army corps), the bulk of the enemy's forces are still on the left bank and that Aylmer's estimate of 8,000 Turks on the right bank still holds good more or less. This makes right bank very tempting, I must say, as he is weak everywhere if the attacker has good troops. Aylmer told me that his right bank push would com-

prise seven brigades; from what happened I cannot believe that he had more than four. I have never been told what his losses were nor the numbers he attacked with, but in a private letter by aeroplane he said that he all but succeeded."

The only answer I got to this wire was a telegram from Corps Commander, dated 24th March: Casualties on 8th-9th March were:

"Killed	..	..	..	513
Wounded	..	..	..	2508
Missing	..	..	..	455
				<hr/>
Total	..	..	..	3476

Present strength of Tigris Army Corps:—

Bayonets	..	..	..	28661
Sabres	..	..	..	1312
				<hr/>
Total	..	..	..	29973
Guns 108."				

At 11 a.m. I directed our heavy guns to shell a hostile cavalry camp which had appeared close to the bridge over the Hai River. At a range of some 9,000 yards, we put shells right into the camp, stampeding horses in every direction and causing the utmost disorder. Had our heavy guns been able to fire quickly we should have made a fine bag, but the appalling slowness of the fire enabled the cavalry to strike camp and get away with little loss.

From 10 p. m. till midnight on 23rd March, the en-



emy's guns bombarded Kut heavily. They started again at 1.30 a. m., and went on all through the night, different batteries relieving each other. Only the heavy guns were firing. I did not answer the fire, as we had only a little oil left for the lanterns for night-firing with the guns, and had to save it in case a real attack by infantry was delivered. Our casualties were only eleven. I now put everyone available in Kut on to protection of the houses against heavy artillery bombardment, and special trouble was taken to protect our mills.

Corps wired me at night on 23rd March that the river had risen one foot in twelve hours, while the Suweika Marsh was spreading and threatening the enemy's camp and trenches on the northern side of Hannah. Um-el-Brahm had stopped spreading and had receded considerably, as our people had diked the Orah Canal and blocked all the cuts and canals which feed this marsh. To-day's aeroplane reconnaissance showed that the river was overflowing the right bank in places. There were no signs of the enemy between Azizieh and Shumran, which camp was much reduced in troops and now contained only a hospital, depot, etc.<sup>2</sup>

Owing to the doubts in my mind as to the success of the Relief Force, in spite of its strength, which was about 30,000 men with 100 guns, I sent the following telegram on 25th March to Corps, repeating it to Headquarters:—

<sup>2</sup> The bulk of the hostile troops at Shumran had crossed by the bridge of boats at that place to the left bank opposite and encamped there.

“There is one serious question to be considered by you in this relief operation in addition to all you already have, and that is the feeding of my force here. If you do not arrive till nearly 15th April, remember that my food will be entirely finished then; and that, although my combatants number 8,390, not including sick and wounded, yet the number of mouths to feed amounts to some 13,400. The Indian followers equal 2,500, S. and T. Corps and Medical Establishment some 700. About 1,470 are in hospital. If your relief operations fail, as please God they will not, and the place falls, you would have to send, under armistice, I suppose, food here, as surely the Turks would not have means to feed all these people; they are short of supplies themselves.”

We observed what looked like a flying-bridge near Madug on 27th March. An iron lighter, estimated as about one hundred feet long, could be seen moving to and fro on the river, besides some pontoons, and shears could be seen on both banks at Madug. This lighter must have been the one which broke adrift in a high wind at Kut in the first few days of the siege, which the gunners at the Fort claimed to have sunk. I wired to Corps asking for verification of this. I also saw a waggonette and a victoria with cavalry escort moving west on the left bank during the morning, evidently on the way back to Shumran from down river. I ascribed them to Von der Goltz, who might be returning from an inspection.

On 28th March I sent a personal telegram to Sir Percy Lake concerning the state of health of the

garrison. I had 560 cases of scurvy in hospital at this date. I feared an increase of the sick list as the weather was now beginning to get hot, and the smells and stench in Kut, already bad enough, would soon become intolerable. These, with the heat added, would undoubtedly bring on epidemics. Therefore, I hoped that no time would be lost in making the push. The Indian troops were weak and consequently dejected; the British troops held their own, owing to eating horse-meat. All of us, I added, felt the strain very much. Speaking personally, I found the responsibility of the open field nothing compared with that of a siege. The probability of floods now came to add to my anxieties. I repeated that the authorities in India would do well, if, after the relief of Kut, the Sixth Division, utterly worn out and shattered, without horses, equipment, or clothing, was sent to India to refit. I reminded him that the siege had now lasted longer than that of Ladysmith.

All the latter half of March was a constant struggle against the Tigris, which, in full flood, was compelling the evacuation of trenches. I had to put every man at work to prevent the inundation breaking into Kut town, and so flooding us out altogether. The same struggle was going on on the part of the Turks and the Relief Force down below Kut.

On 30th March I proposed to Gorringe that in case the enemy constructed a bridge at Magasis, as there were twenty-two pontoons and the lighter above-mentioned there, he should try to destroy it by aerial bombing at night. Meanwhile I would also en-

deavour to destroy it by using the *Sumana* to ram it. A bridge would make a great difference to the enemy in the coming battle. On 29th March I had observed three more pontoons being dragged by men along the right bank from Shumran to the Hai. I supposed this was with the intention of throwing a second bridge over the Hai to facilitate retirement from the Essinn position in case of necessity.

On the same date I sent the following telegram to Corps, repeating it to Headquarters:—

“I suppose you have got your brigade of 60-pounders by now. Is there anything more to come up? I feel certain you understand the great difference that every day makes to us in this state of well-nigh intolerable suspense. Once you have got all your forces and all your means united in your hands I trust you will not let the siege be protracted, especially as the floods are now a great and serious anxiety to me. Thrice now my subordinates have been wrong in their grain estimates, and to-day I am given the news that we have four days’ less food than the figures they gave me. I suppose this is theft, both by troops and Arabs, although we have guard of convalescents on food magazines. However, my staff assure me the deficit is in the cleaning. To hold on to 15th April I am again reducing the ration of the troops. The sepoys are dejected enough already, and now I have again to reduce the ration. I have 580 cases of scurvy among the Indian troops. The enemy hauled five pontoons to the Hai from Shumran to-day by the right bank and three yesterday. I

hope you will let me know as soon as you have decided which bank to come by and not let me be ignorant till the last minute. Any co-operation by the right bank, as you know well, is most difficult for me to carry out, and now the *Sumana* has been disabled. The stop valve was shot away to-night. Have asked you in another wire to send up parts from the *Shihab*<sup>3</sup> or *Shurur* (tug-boats) if you can, as I could use the *Sumana* to ram their bridge if they make it. With the current she could smash it easily."

On 31st March at 9 a. m. a brigade of Turks with transport was observed moving from Sinn Ridge towards Imam Mansur. Eventually it halted near Atab. A similar column, also with transport, was seen moving westwards on the left bank. The camp south-east of Imam Mansur, it was also noticed, had considerably increased.

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<sup>3</sup> These spare parts were to be sent up by aeroplane, but the stop valve was mended by the Engineers in course of twenty-four hours.



## CHAPTER XVII

### THE ATTACK ON EL HANNAH

**A** TELEGRAM from General Gorringe received on 31st March:—

“Preparations for your relief are well forward, and you may be assured that I shall not be a day later than is absolutely necessary. According to Baghdad records and all information, the last flood was the maximum we are likely to have. Another one of possibly equal height may be expected about 10th to 15th next month. The floods threaten and are causing much trouble in the Hannah position to the Turks; so reports the Turkish deserter yesterday, who adds that their food supplies are very short and the casualties daily from our fire are considerable.”

On 2nd April, I received a wire from Headquarters asking me how I proposed to ferry men over the river if need arose, and at what pace I could do it? It was supposed I had used the hides of my butchered animals to make into rafts. The whole of this subject, of course, had been thrashed out between Aylmer and myself when he was in command of Relief Force. In my reply to Headquarters, I said there would still appear to be some misapprehension as regards the difficulties of crossing the Tigris; that my

previous telegrams had sufficiently explained my difficulties and rate of crossing to the other bank with the aid of the *Sumana*; and now she was disabled, as I had reported on 30th March. I did not know on which bank Gorringe would advance to relieve me, though I should be told this early. I had twice made this inquiry.

If Gorringe came by the right bank, I had made it clear several times that I could co-operate with gun-fire within range, but that I could not begin crossing my troops till the troops of the relief force put in an appearance, because the enemy had guns installed on the bank commanding my crossing. In short, Gorringe must not rely on my aid to win through, any more than Buller relied on, or received aid from, White at Ladysmith, although White did not have an impassable, five-hundred-yards-broad river running at five knots an hour on three sides of him, and the fourth side wired, flooded, and enclosed by a triple line of redoubts and entrenchments.

"Nor do I think," I continued, "that Gorringe, with 29,000 men and 108 guns, which strength will easily give him a Maximum Force of 24,000 men and ample gun-power, will require assistance from me to win through a division and a half, or possibly two weak divisions, of the enemy, holding a front of fourteen miles, which extent should on principle require three army corps to hold. My force has now been besieged some four months; the Indian troops are weak and dejected on the total ration of ten ounces of unclean barley, meal, and depressed by the two un-

successful attempts of the relief force to relieve Kut. Had the relief force arrived in January, we could have co-operated with vigour; but now it is very different, and it is the same in every case in history of a beleaguered force.

"If Gorringe comes by the left bank, I will attack the enemy in his entrenchments opposite the Fort—and we shall have to wade through floods to do it. At any rate, Gorringe can be assured I shall do the utmost in my power to co-operate on either bank. I have never contemplated using the skins of the butchered animals for rafts, as I still possess three barges and a dozen mahelas and only one tow for the lot—a steam launch. The skin rafts cannot be towed without falling to pieces and are no use in a strong current. There is no brushwood or straw to stuff the skins, no wood for platforms for the rafts, all available woodwork had been used to make two flying-bridges and trestles for bridging the Hai, in accordance with Aylmer's wishes."

We had not only to fight against the floods, but scurvy was added. The supply of vegetables from the gardens was only enough to supply the hospital, and they were most beneficial in the cure of the disease. But the anomaly, as I told Colonel Hehir, the A.D.M.S., was that "my fighting men got scurvy from having no vegetables. You cure them after weeks in hospital by giving them vegetables which I want to give my fighting men whilst they are well to prevent them from getting scurvy."

But there was nothing to be done. The men

gathered herbs and grass and made spinach, but in some cases wrong sorts were used and men became very ill with acute diarrhoea. Some even died of poisoning in this manner, including Brigadier-General Hoghton.

About 4th April, I asked Headquarters to send me gold to place in my empty treasure-chest, but I received a reply that it seemed unnecessary to pay for local supplies otherwise than by receipts.

I answered that there appeared to be a misunderstanding as to the money question in Kut. I wanted a treasure-chest full of cash for the following reasons: The men had no pay, and were always asking for some to buy local luxuries, such as tea and tobacco, from the town Arabs at any price. (In many cases officers gave 48 rupees for a pound of Arab tobacco.) The Arabs would not take paper-money, and at the beginning of the siege charged the soldier one rupee to change a ten-rupee note, for they thought all along that the Turks must win, and were absolutely hostile to us. I could not flog 6,000 people into taking paper money. All I could do was to keep them in good behaviour by shooting one now and then *pour encourager les autres* when spies, etc., were caught. When I commandeered all the grain in the town, I paid for many hundreds of maunds in rupee notes, and in many cases we had to search long to find it. If the grain had not been found in the town we must have fallen in February, for when I entered Kut our supplies amounted to one month for British troops and fifty-five days for Indian troops. As for pay-

ing with receipts, as we did in the South African War—and how undesirable it was and how much trouble did it cause!—it was quite out of the question here. Another reason which influenced me in asking for money for the treasure-chest, was that should the relief force fail to relieve us, officers and men would go into captivity without a penny in their pockets.

General Gorringe had decided to renew the effort to relieve Kut by the left bank; whilst reinforcements were arriving he had investigated the possibility of advancing on Kut by the right bank from Sheikh Saad, but had decided that the route over which the troops must pass was not flood-proof and was liable to inundation by the breaking of the “bunds” on the right bank of the Tigris by the enemy, under whose control they were. He concluded therefore that a more favourable result would be obtained by an effort by the left bank. The attack on the Turkish position at El Hannah was the first step, and preparations were put in hand for this operation. But this object of operations was not known to me. I was in ignorance of his plans, and only discovered the above from reading Sir Percy Lake’s despatches whilst a prisoner at Constantinople.

The 7th Division had been engaged in sapping up to the enemy’s front trenches at Hannah on the left bank. They were under continuous fire, and were hampered by the floods, but by March 28th their sap-heads were only 150 yards from the Turkish front line. The 3rd Division was apparently installed on the right bank.



On 1st April the 13th (British) Division moved up from Sheikh Saad to relieve the 7th Division in their front trenches preparatory to the assault. I did not even know of the arrival of this division at the front.

All I knew was that General Gorringe was going to make an effort on the morning of 5th April. On the 4th I received the following telegram from him:—

“My plans for the final stage of operations must necessarily depend on measure of our success in the first stage, which commences to-morrow, on the state of the river and flood, and on enemy’s dispositions, all of which factors cannot be ascertained at present. I quite appreciate that your co-operation must in the first instance be purely passive, but you are the rock on which I hope to split the Turkish forces, and your co-operation by gun-fire, etc., on his ferry at Magasis, and by containing enemy on left bank on the last day’s operations will assist us greatly. I will keep you informed fully of our progress. This has been repeated to H.Q.”

On the night of 4th April I wired to Gorringe, wishing him good luck in his effort, and said that the Turks at Essinn had just shown a green light, which meant “ammunition wanted,” followed by a red one, signifying that the British were advancing. Gorringe replied that all his preparations were made and he should attack at dawn.

I continue this narrative with a few extracts taken *verbatim* from my diary.

“5th April. A violent bombardment heard at 5.20

a. m. Flashes of bursting shells clearly visible over El Hannah. This bombardment continued to 6 a. m. and then ceased.

"At 8.35 a. m. message from Gorringe to say that he had taken the first five lines of the El Hannah position. Here is good news at last.

"At 10 a. m. a transport convoy of the enemy moved back from Essinn to the Hai on the right bank, appeared to fill up at Atab, went back to Sheikh Imam Mansur and waited, it seemed, all day.

"10.45 a. m. I opened fire on the Hai bridge with a 5-inch gun, which made very bad practice at 11,000 yards' range, putting a couple of shots over the Hai and one into that river as the transport proceeded over the bridge towards Shumran.

"I issued the same projects as on 4th March to Brigade Commanders, the former slightly modified, for co-operation with Gorringe by either bank.

"At 1 p. m. I ordered Maule (C.R.A.) to open fire with the heavy guns on Magasis ferry, about the same range as that of the Hai bridge—11,000 yards. The direction was very bad, but one or two shots fell in the river at the ferry. There were a number of Turks about there, but no considerable movement. Considerable numbers of hostile infantry were withdrawn from the network of trenches round the Woolpress village, and at 8.40 a. m. were apparently being directed on the Hai River bridge, moving with first-line transport. At 4 p. m. the ferry at Magasis was again being used—small parties being taken to the right bank from the left. The *Sumana's* boiler was

mended to-day and steam got up in the evening. During the day I received a message from Army Headquarters that the War Office wired as follows:—‘Marsh wires 6th April that Baratoff has been ordered to advance on Khanikin immediately, using all available force.’ See my appreciation of the situation 15th March, para. 9, sent to G.H.Q. by their order to send to Commander-in-Chief in India. Baratoff should have been moving three weeks ago.

“I am much surprised to hear nothing from Gorringe. It produces uneasiness. All nerves very strung at the hope of relief from this state of suspense and uncertainty. No news in the night. We heard a bombardment on the left bank about Sannaiyat in the morning of 6th April, and, it seemed, a rather violent one at 7.30 a.m. I wired to Gorringe for news, feeling uneasy by now, also telling him I could see a 40-pounder gun being towed by bullocks going east at Imam al Mansur, having come evidently from Hai bridge.

“6th April. There was much activity at Magasis ferry at 8 a.m., and I ordered fire by the 5-inch guns in consequence on this point. Men could be seen being ferried across, but the movement ceased after some eight rounds had been used. The observers at Fort had strict orders to keep a sharp look-out on Magasis ferry, and to keep me posted instantly of any movement there. A haze and mirage made accurate observation difficult till about 4 p.m.”

I sent a telegram to Headquarters during the afternoon. “Can you give me any news of Gorringe?

I have not heard from him since 8.30 yesterday morning, when he wired he had carried the first five lines of the Hannah position. I wired this morning asking for news. It is now 4.30 p. m. and I have heard nothing. No news I suppose is good news but it makes my people uneasy. I do not want to bother Gorringer in the midst of work, but he should not keep one like this without news." I also sent a wire to Gorringer that there was every indication this afternoon that the enemy were transferring troops from the right to the left bank at Magasis ferry, that I had been firing at the ferry the greater part of the afternoon accordingly, and had interrupted their movements. I proposed to continue at a slow rate of fire throughout the night if this met with his wishes. I said that I thought that he ought to give me an idea of what was going on. "I have not heard from you now for thirty-four hours." This wire I repeated to Headquarters.

"The river has risen 3 feet  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches in the last twenty-four hours. At the Fort the flood is an inch higher than the last high flood level and the intervening ground between the enemy's trenches and ours is flooded. In the north-west section of defence there are fifteen inches of water in the reserve communication way; everyone is being put on flood protection work."

The wireless could not get into communication for part of the day with Corps or Headquarters, the atmosphere interfering. At 4 p. m. our wireless was called up, but before a message could be taken

atmospherics interfered. Lieut. Greenwood, in charge of the wireless, was slightly wounded by a shell in the evening when returning from inspecting his aerial.

At 10 p. m. I received a message from Gorringe in answer to my question if he desired me to fire on the Magasis ferry through the night: "Not at present. Better reserve fire for later." I was still more surprised that nothing was mentioned about his action that day.

Mr. Spooner, the Chaplain, came to me during the afternoon to tell me that the date was most propitious. He showed me the Collect for the week—the 4th Sunday in Lent:

"Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that we, who for our evil deeds do worthily deserve to be punished, by the comfort of thy grace may mercifully be relieved; through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, Amen."

He was a great help to me in the siege, for he was always cheery and brave under fire; he was loved by the men. I shall always have the greatest respect and esteem and affection for him.

By a Reuter's telegram received on 5th April, I saw that the question of our advance on Baghdad with an inadequate force was on the *tapis*, and I was much interested to read that:—"In Lords, Beresford asked was General Townshend consulted with reference to Baghdad expedition, had he less than a division when he started should he not have had three, and was Townshend or Nixon responsible for the ad-



vance on Ctesiphon. Lord Islington said he was unable to answer first question prior to advance, and nothing was known of any representations addressed to Nixon by Townshend with reference to advance to Ctesiphon which was authorised by Imperial Government on advice of Nixon and Government of India. Lord Crewe, supplementing Islington's statement, said that there had not been single instance in war in which the military or naval commander had been asked to undertake operation with forces which he declared insufficient, he made that statement without smallest reserve. Ends." This supplement of Lord Crewe's I should describe as an unhappy minuteness of detail.

On 7th April, in the early morning, I received a telegram from Corps, dated 6th April, 1.23 p. m.:—

"We captured Abu Roman position yesterday afternoon. Last night we took by assault the trenches north of Felahieh bend. We attacked left of Sannaiyat position this morning, and have made good our footing within 400 yards of this same, where we are now entrenched." (Abu Roman mounds are on the right bank, opposite Sannaiyat, and in the locality where I bivouacked my division previous to my advance to Nakhailat to fight the Battle of Kut-al-Amara. Felahieh and Sannaiyat are on the left bank.)

From this I gathered that Gorringe had divided his forces on each bank of the river and was attacking with both of them. I knew nothing of his dis-

positions or plans, and this I continually complained of, both to him and to General Headquarters.

At 6.45 a.m. on 7th April we heard a violent bombardment on the left bank, about Sannaiyat we reckoned. About 7.15 a.m. it still continued with unabated violence. There was great excitement among the troops and the Arabs of the town. The rupee went up in value greatly with the Arabs, and the troops were cheery and glad. The housetops were covered with spectators watching the smoke of the shells in the distance down river.

At 7.30 this cannonade ceased, and was followed by silence. Heavy artillery fire was resumed at 9.30, lasting till 10.20, when it slackened. We fired all the morning on Magasis Ferry, having to cease fire at 10.30 a.m., owing to mirage. On this day I received a wire from Headquarters in reference to a telegram they had received from the Secretary of State, saying that allegations were being made at home that I had protested formally against the advance on Baghdad, stating that the force at my command was quite insufficient, and asking me to telegraph what I had to say. My answer was:—

“This is my reply, which I trust will be allowed to go in *verbatim*, as there must be no misunderstanding. I most certainly considered we were running grave risk in continuing the strategic offensive on Baghdad with only my weak division, of which my British battalions were reduced to mere half-battalions, and all casualties at Battle of Kut-al-Amara had been filled

up with raw recruits from India, and over 300 miles from the sea with no other troops to support me. Moreover, operations in Gallipoli theatre indicated our troops in that zone evidently contained and held by Turks, who would undoubtedly reinforce Mesopotamian theatre to save Baghdad. Although Sir John Nixon had given me the entire conduct of operations, beginning with Kurna-Amarah in May up to date, and gave me his confidence, it will be understood how difficult it was for me, a subordinate general, to give my opinion unasked to the Army Commander. However, I considered it my absolute duty to indicate to him the risk I ran in moving forward to attack the well-known strong position of Ctesiphon and occupy Baghdad with my present force. After having pointed out the risk I had my conscience clear and was ready to undertake any order he might give me. In consequence then I telegraphed my 120-G (*not* B) of 3rd October from Azizieh, which place I had halted at in my pursuit of Turks after Kut-al-Amara battle, finding they had rallied at Ctesiphon. The exact words in which I pointed out risk were as follows. Begins: 'On the other hand, if Government desire to occupy Baghdad then I am of the opinion that a methodical advance from Kut by two divisions or an army corps, or one division closely supported by another division, exclusive of line of communication troops garrisoning the important places of Amarah, Ahwaz, Nasiriyeh, is absolutely necessary unless great risk is to be incurred.' Ends.

"That I consider sufficiently indicated the risk. In my opinion a subordinate commander cannot do more than that, to protest in full sense of meaning of the word would not be discipline.

"I should like to add that previous to the battle of Kut-al-Amara I told Sir John Nixon that I hoped not only to beat the Turks in their position at Kut-al-Amara, but completely rout them as at Kurna, in which case I would conduct the pursuit myself as I did at Kurna, and if I saw a chance of running into Baghdad on the heels of the rout I should do so and take the risk as I did in May in the case of occupying Amarah. But the Turks rallied in formidable numbers at Ctesiphon, and so I halted at Azizieh. I had gained much knowledge of Turkish reinforcements in Mesopotamia and experience of battle of Kut showed me I had very different troops to deal with compared with those at Kurna, and saw that it behoved me to be cautious, and that to take Baghdad meant at least an army corps.

"I mention this to show that I had myself in the first case contemplated getting into Baghdad, and that I am quite willing to undertake all responsibility for my actions."

In answer to my various protests at not receiving any news, I had a wire from Gorringe at 10.40 a. m. to say that he sent me messages at midday and the day before, and that he would keep me daily informed at midday. He said he would rather I reserved fire on the ferry for the present, as it would be more effective when he got far enough forward to reach it

with guns from his side also. In this way we should be able to prevent any movement across the river by our combined fire. He had last night (6th April) pushed forward on the right bank, and had now a forward position from which he was able to enfilade the enemy's position at Sannaiyat, for the capture of which his preparations were now progressing. Yesterday he had been rather hampered by the rising of the river, but by now his "bunds" were all secured.

Headquarters authorised me at this time to award as many Distinguished Conduct Medals for gallantry as I considered deserving, up to twenty for British troops for the defence of Kut, and forty Distinguished Service Medals and ten Orders of Merit for Indian troops subsequent to the withdrawal of the force from Ctesiphon to Kut, i.e., since 3rd December. Thus the honours and rewards of the British rank and file and Indian officers and rank and file had been attended to by Government—but no honours or rewards for British officers had been awarded for the Battles of Kurna, Kut-al-Amara, Ctesiphon, or the defence of Kut, with the exception of one or two Distinguished Service Orders and Military Crosses to subaltern ranks.

At 9 p.m. on 7th April we heard a very lively half-hour's bombardment in progress over Sannaiyat. On 8th April I wired to Corps, repeating to Headquarters:—"A column of 1,000 horsemen came into sight on square 37 D about 5 p.m. yesterday, moving from east to south-west towards the Hai bridge, near which they camped, and are not visible to-day.



We put two lyddite shells to-day into Magasis Fort, and much upset their transport collected there. There was no work to speak of at the ferry there on 7th April. The gunboat *Sumana* is now working well. My mills can work no longer owing to lack of fuel. I have food up to 15th April."

At 1 p.m. on 8th April Gorringe wired me:—"The attack takes place at dawn to-morrow, and we hope to capture Sannaiyat position." I telegraphed to Gorringe, repeating to Headquarters, in reply, that I did not want to bother him at a time when he had so much to do and to think of, but I considered he should give me more details, even if only a line or two to say whether things were going well or otherwise. I had only seven days' food and one emergency ration, and if I knew that he was in difficulties I would immediately reduce even the ration we were on. "It is essential you should tell me more than you do, for every military reason."

Was I unreasonable? I hope not. If I was I hope that Gorringe has forgiven me. It must be remembered that we had been on the rack for over four months—not to speak of the trials and anxieties of the Ctesiphon operations and the retreat to Kut. I am sure all soldiers will understand the great strain all this was.

Headquarters wired to Gorringe, repeating to me: "Army Commander knows that you must realise how essential it is for you to keep Townshend fully informed of your progress."

On 9th April (Sunday) I wired to Headquarters

asking the result of Gorringe's attack at dawn on that day. We had heard a very heavy bombardment from 5 to 6 a. m. Headquarters answered:—"The 13th Division tried to assault the position at dawn. Turks discovered advance when leading troops were within 100 yards and manned trenches in force, opening very heavy fire. Division failed to reach enemy's fire trench and is dug in, its nearest detachments being within 300 yards of enemy's position. At present they are reorganizing, evacuating wounded and resting."

With reference to this action Khalil Pacha told me afterwards that the reason why the 13th Division failed was because there were no troops following up the attack in support. "There was no depth in it," he said.

I do not know accurately what Gorringe's dispositions for his attack were, but from what I can gather I believe he had fairly equal forces on both banks of the river, making combined efforts.

My opinion as set down in my diary was that if his principal objectives were the bulk of the hostile forces on the left bank, his Principal Mass should have been on the left bank, since the bulk of the enemy's forces was entrenched there. A bare minimum force should have been placed on the right bank just sufficient to contain the enemy's forces. In this way the principle of Economy of Force would have been observed, and Gorringe would have had a large Principal Mass, the weight and depth of which should have carried it through. Had I divided my forces at

the Battle of Kut-al-Amara in Gorringe's way, I am sure that I should have been defeated instead of winning a decisive victory. This criticism is made in no carping spirit. On the contrary, I am only too grateful for the great efforts and energy and courage shown by Aylmer and Gorringe. I criticise their dispositions in the same way that I should criticise them were I the Director of such manœuvres as theirs in peace time.

The news was bad. No longer could there be any doubt about it. It was certain that I should not be relieved by 15th April.

I sent a telegram to Headquarters, acknowledging the receipt of their telegram and pointing out that I had had no news from Gorringe. From what they had told me, it appeared to me doubtful, I said, that Gorringe could relieve me by 15th April. Therefore I had reduced the ration to seven ounces of barley, which would enable me to hold on till 17th April. After the two previous failures of Aylmer, I was forced to think that it was possible that Gorringe would not be able to relieve us at all. I said also that I supposed Gorringe's casualties had been very heavy. The situation must be faced. If Gorringe failed in his effort, the Turks would grant no terms but absolute surrender unless the course Sir Percy Lake had suggested in his wire of 30th March was adopted. If the worst came to the worst—that is to say, if the Turks would give no terms at all—I proposed to endeavour to run the blockade down the river in the *Sumana*, with six or seven hundred of the most use-

ful men to the State—staff, artillerymen, engineers, flying corps, wireless men, etc. I asked Government to approve this step. All the remainder of my force would be left behind under a junior Brigadier-General to treat with the enemy. I added that of course I should not take such a step until it was clear that the Turks would grant nothing but surrender.

There was a full moon on 17th April. I said that the unexpected possibly might happen, the Turks might retreat unexpectedly, as they did at Shaiba. But on the other hand they might not do so. I considered that they were elated, for they had begun to shell hard again. If there were any serious doubt in Sir Percy Lake's mind as to Gorrings's ultimate success, would it not be better to begin negotiations whilst I had some food left? These negotiations, I said, should be made by the General Officer commanding the Relief Force. I added that there was not the slightest chance of my being able to break out by land, even by the Fort. The enemy's trenches were eleven feet deep and six feet wide, and all of them were inundated by the flood, which reached my own trenches. Past all the other fronts ran the impassable Tigris. In addition to all the above difficulties, as I had made evident in many telegrams of late, the troops now were very weak.

About 11 p. m. on 9th April, I received a telegram from Gorrings:—"This morning we again attacked the Sannaiyat trenches, but failed to win through. We are now consolidating our positions as close as we can to the enemy's trenches and pressing on all

preparations for digging still closer with the intention of attacking again. We have been hampered by floods on the right bank stretching from the river both east and west of the Abu Roman Mounds down to the Umm-al-Brahm; this, however, is being remedied. Sannaiyat is held by the enemy in strength. Aeroplane states Beit Aiessa<sup>1</sup> was held, also Sinn banks and Dujailah, cavalry camp at Atab. These latter (i.e., cavalry) operate daily along the Jumeielat ridge and there is a position there."

The above was evidently Gorrings's second unsuccessful effort against the Sannaiyat position. I supposed, in the absence of details, that El Hannah, which Gorrings had taken previously to attacking Sannaiyat, was merely an advanced position (lightly held) to the enemy's main position at Sannaiyat.

I got no comfort from this telegram, for Gorrings told me he was "digging in again." This game exactly suited the Turks, who would dig in much faster and better than our people. I had no confidence in the plan, and I wired and told Headquarters so. I added: "I have ordered the reduction of all rations, British and Indian, still further, to five ounces of barley meal. I can no longer favour the Indian troops in the matter of meal. There is the horse-meat, which their religious leaders in India have authorised them to eat, and, by their not having taken advantage of this, they have weakened my power of resistance by one month at least, so I have no sympathy left for them in that direction. This re-

<sup>1</sup> A small Arab house standing on the river bank.



duction of ration should enable me to hold on to 21st April, I think, but I will inform you later on. Would you tell me if reinforcements are on the way up to fill gaps in the Corps, and if they are close enough at hand to turn the scale? Our 'bunds' are holding the water out. If Kut falls we shall require food sent up in ships at once under armistice; the Turks will have no spare food for us."

On 10th April I wired to Gorringe: "Of course I do not know what your losses are, or any details to speak of, but I gather that they must be considerable. I have now reduced ration to five ounces of meal for all ranks, British and Indian, which will enable me, I believe, to hold out to 21st April, but there will be no strength left in the troops to make any exertion. Do you want time now, or do you still contemplate relieving me by 15th April? I hope you have reinforcements at hand to fill up your gaps. At the digging game and holding on, remember, the Turk is as good, if not better, than our people. He is only inferior in the open out of his trenches."

It will be seen from this account of the siege of Kut that every time the Relief Force met with a reverse or a check, I made a counter-move by reducing the food ration to allow for the delays in getting up reinforcements by the Commander of the Relief Force. The great disadvantage of this plan, however, inherent in all histories of sieges, is that with the diminished food you reduce the physical strength of the garrison to an alarming extent, and consequently their courage and hope, and you reduce their fighting

value to almost nothing. Consider the fighting value of my splendid troops at the battle of Ctesiphon when only 8,200 bayonets threw 20,000 to 24,000 Turks out of the first line of entrenchments and redoubts. Then, during the retreat—in beautiful order and discipline—from Ctesiphon to Kut, such was their fighting value that I was able to maul and throw back in disorder the 12,000 men forming the Turkish advanced guard, and continue my retreat in the same perfect order as if I were on peace manœuvres in East Anglia. These same men were now dejected and weak by reason of the long siege. Their former high hopes were giving way to despair. I speak of the bulk of my force—the Indians. The English were as tenacious and brave as ever. They were my sheet-anchor. Without the (now—alas!—skeleton) battalions of Norfolks, Dorsets, Oxfords (who showed magnificent courage and bravery at Ctesiphon where they bore the brunt of the battle), the wing to the West Kents (the old Half Hundred), the Hampshire Territorial Infantry, and the detachments of bluejackets of the Royal Navy, Kut would have fallen, in my opinion, at the end of March.

Of course there were many exceptions among the Indian troops. The 7th Gurkhas, for example, behaved splendidly, and I counted on them as on British troops. But I must say that *towards the end* of this long siege most of the British officers had little confidence in the Indians. Not their fault. They are not constituted by nature to stand misfortune and reverse with the same stoicism as Europeans.

On 10th April I published the following *communiqué* to the troops under my command:—

“The result of the attack of the Relief Force on the Turks entrenched in the Sannaiyat position is that the Relief Force has not yet won its way through, but is entrenched close up to the Turks, in places some two to three hundred yards distant. General Gorringe wired me last night that he was consolidating his position as close to the enemy’s trenches as he can get, with the intention of attacking again. He had had some difficulty with the floods, which he had remedied.

“I have no other details. However, you will see that I must not run any risk over the date calculated to which our rations would last—namely, 15th April. As you will understand well, digging means delay, though General Gorringe does not say so.

“I am compelled therefore to appeal to you all to make a determined effort to eke out our scanty means so that I can hold out for certain till our comrades arrive, and I know I shall not appeal to you in vain.

“I have then to reduce our rations to five ounces of meal for all ranks, British and Indian.

“In this way I can hold out till 21st April, if it becomes necessary, and it is my duty to take all precautions in my power.

“I am very sorry I can no longer favour the Indian soldiers in the matter of meal, but there is no possibility of doing so now. It must be remembered

that there is plenty of horseflesh which they have been authorised by their religious leaders to eat, and I have to recall with sorrow that by not having taken advantage of this wise and just dispensation, they have weakened my power of resistance by one month.

"In my *communiqué* to you of 26th January I told you that our duty stood out plain and simple; it was to stand here and hold up the Turkish advance on the Tigris, working heart and soul together. I expressed the hope that we would make this defence to be remembered in history as a glorious one, and I asked you in this connection to remember the defence of Plevna, which was longer than even that of Ladysmith.

"Well! you have nobly carried out your mission; you have nobly answered the trust and appeal I made to you. The whole British Empire, let me tell you, is ringing now with our defence of Kut.

"You will all be proud to say one day: 'I was one of the garrison at Kut!' As for Plevna and Ladysmith, we have outlasted them also. Whatever happens now we have all done our duty. As I said in my report of the defence of this place, which has now been telegraphed to Headquarters—I said that it was not possible in despatches to mention everyone, but I could safely say that every individual in this force had done his duty to his King and Country. I was absolutely calm and confident, as I told you, on 26th January, of the ultimate result; and I am confident now. I ask you all, comrades of all ranks,

British and Indian, to help me now in this food question in the manner I have mentioned.

“CHARLES TOWNSHEND,

“Kut-al-Amara,

*Major-General.*

“10th April, 1916.”

The result of the above appeal to the troops was that on the very next day 5,135 Indians, including followers, were eating horse-flesh. In addition to the above *communiqué* I had sent round a memo. to General Officers commanding Brigades asking them to deal firmly with pessimistic talk and gossip amongst the officers, exemplifying a case with which I had had to deal.

I had a long and intimate talk with General Delamain in the trenches of the north-west front on the afternoon of 10th April, when we discussed everything. We both agreed that it would be a great piece of luck if Gorringe were now able to throw the Turks out of their position. There was no doubt that the Turks would have added another line of trenches, in addition to what already existed, in the course of a day or two.

There were two things which struck me particularly throughout these operations. They were:—

(a) Our people were always a month late in their plans and a division short in their numbers.

(b) The fundamental principles of Economy of Force and the Mass were often disregarded or violated. Always, it seemed to me, too large a force was allotted to the minimum force established on that



bank of the river on which the principal effort was not to be made. Thus the Principal Mass, on the bank of the river on which the principal effort was to be made, was never strong enough.

On the same day I received a telegram from Headquarters saying that there could be no doubt but that Gorringe could in time force his way through to Kut. In consequence, however, of yesterday's failure it was certainly doubtful if he could reach me by 15th April. It seemed to Headquarters that there were two ways of increasing my powers of resistance:—

1st.—To evict all the inhabitants of Kut with the exception of a few who might have been of special assistance to me.

2nd.—To try to get more supplies to me by ships running the gauntlet at night. But the Navy considered that this alternative offered very slight chances of success owing to the very strong current necessitating slow progress and confining operations to moonlight nights. It might, however, be tried as a last resort after the relief force got through Sannaiyat.

They asked up to what date eviction of the inhabitants would permit me to hold out, and how I would propose to carry it out. They presumed that I had already carried out a thorough house-to-house search for concealed or buried supplies; and they said that they were considering the possibility of flooding the Turkish communications on one or both banks.

In reply, on 11th April, I said that to evict all the inhabitants of Kut, though correct in theory, was impossible in practice. The population was 6,000. On reaching Kut in my retirement from Ctesiphon, I ordered that all the inhabitants should be evicted. Sir Percy Cox came to see me on their behalf. At first I did not listen to him, saying that it was the practice of war when a place was to be defended, though it was true that it was very seldom done. Cox argued that all the women and children would perish, as they could not carry enough food with them. In the end I decided that the actual house-owners and families should remain, and turned out all Arab travellers and aliens staying at Kut—some six or seven hundred. The Turks now shot on sight all Arabs who tried to escape from the town; batches of mahela men had frequently escaped by swimming on goatskins at night, heavily fired at by the enemy's picquets along the right bank. A few nights before a survivor returned to town wounded. He said that the batch he was with were captured by the Turks on landing on the right bank. They were all tried and shot at once, he alone managing to escape. Apart from this, neither women nor children could cross the flooded area on the land side between our trenches and the enemy's, owing to the deep trenches and communicating ways covered now by the floods, which it took a reconnaissance a few nights before some hours to cross by means of ladder-bridges. If I put them on the thirty mahelas I had, on each of which one or two hundred could be packed, these boats would be

fired into. It would be a massacre, the story of which would ring throughout Mesopotamia as an example of the protection which the British had guaranteed to the Arabs under our rule; and it would have a disastrous political effect.

Regarding ships running the gauntlet: I said I thought they would reach us, but there would be a heavy shell-fire on them from the moment they appeared till they got away—not to speak of the voyage. We were raked from all points of the compass, and there was no cover whatever for ships. We managed to protect the *Sumana* only by mooring mahelas around her and building up mud or sandbag walls on them.

During the siege I had got out of the town 900 tons of barley, 150 of wheat, and 1,600 of ghi (rancid butter). Without this we should have fallen long before. We were now feeding 3,500 Arabs; the remainder still possessed food of their own and could last out as long as we. The Arabs were eating horses and donkeys; and an appeal I had made to the Indian troops would, I hoped, induce *them* now to eat horse-flesh. I could only hold out to 20th April, I concluded. I saw no possible way of carrying on longer. If the steamers bringing provisions could tow barges, they could reach Kut, slip their barges, turn round, and go back at full speed in one night. That would mean rations for twelve days for my force on half rations.

In a further telegram to Headquarters on 12th April, I informed them that another careful search

from house to house had been made, and only  $8\frac{1}{2}$  ounces of uncleaned barley-meal per day per head had been left for the inhabitants. We were feeding 3,700 Arabs, men, women and children, without means of subsistence, by soup kitchen and on mules and donkeys. I drew attention to the weak state of my troops, reduced to five ounces of barley meal daily, in order to hold out to 21st April. If the food ships did not arrive till 21st April I believed that a large number of the non-horse-flesh-eating Indian soldiers would die. Already a certain number of them were dying daily, the A.D.M.S. reported to me, from want of food, anxiety, strain, and dejection. If on the morrow even food ships arrived, the A.D.M.S. officially informed me that, as a result of this want of food and the low state of the men, fifty per cent. of the troops would die or be invalided if they were kept in Mesopotamia in the coming hot weather. This prospect would not be confined to the Indian troops only; a large percentage of the British soldiers would die. I instanced the example of my occupation of Amarah in June the year before after the Battle of Kurna. In about one week I had 1,000 men in hospital out of the two brigades. Finally, "if the worst comes to the worst, and Kut falls, and we have no food here, as I have previously pointed out, the Turks will not have a biscuit to spare for our men, and the drama which will then be enacted is best not spoken of."

I continued that all that I had said were notorious

facts, to the truth of which every officer and soldier in my force could bear testimony, and I did not think anyone could ever accuse me of pessimism.

I added that Gorringe, wiring to me on 10th April, said that time was all he required. I entirely sympathised with his efforts and difficulties, but I could not avoid observing, from my point of view, that if ever it was urgent business for a relieving force to raise a siege and not protract it, it was now—that is to say, consistently with uniting all his forces in his hand. “Gorringe knows, no doubt, that every moment he delays eminently favours the Turkish plan of passive defence and digging in; and they will dig in like moles till attacked again. It must be remembered that both Sir John Nixon and Aylmer also asked for time; and so the one month defence I bargained for has now developed into four and a half months. Longer than Plevna. Government has no cause for complaint against us, I think.”

We now come to the attempt of the Commander of the Relief Force to put food into Kut by means of the aeroplane, the first time in war, I take it, that it had been attempted so to supply a beleaguered garrison with food—and I may say at once that it was a complete failure.

Asked by Headquarters how much food I required per day, I replied that I wanted 5,000 lbs., made up of flour, sugar, chocolate, salt and ghi. That would give 6 ounces each to



British	.. .. .	2,970
Indians (over 3,000 followers in this total)	.. .. .	10,870
Town Arabs	.. .. .	3,700

I asked that all supplies might be double-bagged so as to avoid loss by sacks breaking when dropped from a great height.

The Officer Commanding aviation service with the Relief Force said he could do this if the weather were favourable, each machine making three trips daily. He wanted two or three days in which to design suitable fittings. I had misgivings that the air service would break down, and in any case weather conditions would greatly affect it, to say nothing of enemy aircraft, which would quickly see what was happening and obstruct our machines. I had greater hopes of the Navy. Admiral Wemyss, well known as a gallant and efficient sailor, had just arrived at Headquarters, and I knew that he would do it if anyone could.

Anyone who has done service with Indian troops needs no description of my difficulties in interfering with their prejudices and religious feelings in the matter of food, and above all in such a question as horse-meat, so abhorrent to them. However, I determined, as the occasion was one of life or death, to make a further and decided effort to compel them to eat horse-flesh. I could not have done so before since Mohammedans formed the bulk of my Indian troops, and I had had considerable trouble, not only during

the defence of Kut, but even prior to my advance from Azizieh against Ctesiphon. It is not perhaps desirable that I should mention details. I will merely state that throughout the defence of Kut bundles of seditious pamphlets printed in Hindi and Urdu were introduced by the Turks, chiefly by means of throwing these bundles into the barbed wire of entrenchments during darkness. The pamphlets called on the Mohammedans not to fight against brothers of their own religion under pain of hell fire. Lands and wives were offered by the Turks to all who deserted. I have had much experience of Mohammedan troops, both in the north of India and in the Sudan, and no one has a greater regard and sympathy for them than I have. It cannot be denied that I have great influence with them, and nowhere has that been proved in a more pronounced manner than in Mesopotamia.

On 12th April I accordingly published the following *communiqué* to the Indian ranks of my force, attaching to it the Principal Medical Officer's report on the health of those Indian soldiers who were daily dying through refusing to eat horse-flesh:—"In continuation of my *communiqué* to all troops, dated 10th April, and with special reference to the attached note of the A.D.M.S., in which he emphasises the vital importance of every Indian of the force at once eating horse-flesh for the preservation of his strength and even life during the next few days—I again issue an appeal to every man of you to stand by your King, your rulers, and the Government that protects you, by taking heed of the warning note of the A.D.M.S.

“You have already received permission and every encouragement from your own ruling Princes<sup>2</sup> and your religious leaders also to eat horse-flesh in this dire emergency. 5,135<sup>3</sup> of you now see their duty plain and clear, and are already eating horse-flesh to preserve their health and strength.

“As General Officer Commanding this Force I wish it to be clearly understood that I shall replace all non-meat eaters, who become too feeble to do their duty efficiently as officers or non-commissioned officers, by other men who eat meat and remain strong.

“In the case of all officers and men who fail in their duty to the State, I shall cause a list of their names to be prepared, and lay those names before the Government of India for such action as Government may think fit.

“C. V. F. TOWNSHEND,

“Kut-al-Amara.

*Major-General.*

“12th April, 1916.”

Copy of report, dated 12th April, 1916, from the A.D.M.S. to me:—

“The Indian troops and followers are now in a state of semi-starvation. The reduction of the grain ration to five ounces per man, which has of necessity been commenced, will, during the course of the ensuing week or ten days, reduce them to a state of great

<sup>2</sup> A considerable number of our Indian soldiers had been enlisted in the independent States of India.

<sup>3</sup> This included followers.

debility and emaciation, and very seriously militate against their utility as a defence force. In expressing this opinion I would lay stress on the fact that the quantity of grain mentioned forms their entire ration.

"I consider that the universal use of horse-flesh by Indians would materially keep down the death and sickness rates, ameliorate a vast amount of human suffering, assist in preventing the progress of the effects of starvation, and maintain a large share in such a physical state as will enable them to carry on their garrison duties."

The threat to promote others in the place of those Indian officers and N.C.O.'s who refused to eat horse-meat, and the actual fulfilment of it in one or two cases, had a good effect, for by nightfall 7,054 Indians (soldiers and followers) were eating horse-flesh. Some still refused. Two days later 9,329 Indians were eating horse-meat.

On 13th April, at 6.55 a.m., very heavy fire was heard on the right bank in the direction of Beit Aiessa. I supposed it was Gorringe's force making headway towards that locality. At 7.15 a.m. I opened fire with 5-inch guns, hindering the passage of a considerable number of Turkish troops from the left to the right bank.

On this day Gorringe wired to say that he had been obliged to postpone operations in order to let the ground dry after heavy rain. The floods, the rains, all the elements worked against us now as they had done in Aylmer's time.

On the same date I received from G.H.Q. some

details of the first fighting of the Relief Force from Headquarters: "The Turks cleared from El Hannah on the night of 4th-5th April, leaving a rear guard to oppose our advance. On the morning of the 5th Felahieh was held by three battalions with machine-guns, two of which were taken on the night of the 5th-6th, with the position. Sannaiyat was very strongly held and attempts by the Seventh Division to take it on the morning of the 9th, were, as you know, unsuccessful. These attempts, owing to the shortness of time available, were made without a close preliminary approach and consolidation. Systematic approach to this position is necessarily slow, as the ground is water-logged and moonlight nights force the approach to be chiefly by sapping. The Army Commander has decided with Gorringe on another and quicker plan of operations, which is being put into effect. Gorringe will certainly inform you when your co-operation is possible. Casualties in troops up to yesterday morning are estimated at 5,000, of which about half have already been made good by reinforcements. The balance should also be made good within the next few days."

I saw by this telegram that I had been right in my supposition that El Hannah and Felahieh were only temporary positions, lightly held.

On 14th April I wired to Headquarters, repeating to Corps:—"By making the emergency ration last two days instead of one I can hold out till 24th April. Beyond that date we shall be dependent on food by the air service, except horse-meat, which



will last till 29th. I hope this air-service food supply will commence as soon as possible, so as to accumulate food before 23rd, as it must be remembered there will be inhabitants to feed as well as troops. By reducing rations now to four ounces I could save food for 24th April. If you think this is necessary let me know, but you will understand such a course—namely, reducing to four ounces of meal, which in reality means only three ounces of actual food—will result in increase of deaths. Nine thousand two hundred and thirty-nine Indians, including Gurkhas and followers, are eating horse-meat. This leaves 1,500 Indians who are abstaining from same; this 1,500 includes sick and wounded Indians in hospital.”

I asked also what Admiral Wemyss thought of running the gauntlet. If a steamer could tow up two barges against stream in time to get to Kut, slip barges and get back again during darkness, I did not think the Turks would hit the moving target. Melliss tells me his Nasiriyeh experiences in this respect, and I have my own Kurna experiences in this direction.

I asked if they could let me know to what date they wanted me to hold out. I said that I did not want to hustle Gorringe, but I felt uneasy when I heard of his digging in. The air-service food supply seemed the proper remedy, but it should be begun quickly. I added that as Headquarters and Gorringe both knew how much food I had and the weak state of my Indian troops, they must expect no weight in my

co-operation. It is the history of all sieges, I added.

I received a telegram from Corps saying that owing to the weather they had not been able to send aeroplanes with supplies but that they would be sent as soon as opportunity offered. The weather and floods continued to hamper their preparations for further advance. The work on the roads through the marsh was going on as satisfactorily as the weather permitted. According to their information the Turks were experiencing great difficulty in supplying themselves on the left bank owing to the extension of the Suwada marsh and floods to the north of Kut. They were said in consequence to be crossing over supplies from the right bank. A flood therefore would add considerably to their difficulties. There was not much comfort in that telegram. The expedient of running the blockade by a ship, Headquarters informed me, would only be resorted to in the last extremity, but they were making preliminary preparations and a ship was being held in readiness.

On 14th April the grain in possession of the town Arabs was finished; the Military Governor, however, said he could feed them on donkeys and ponies of the town for another eight days. He had also organised a soup kitchen for Arab women and children. I increased the strength of the picquets in the town, as I expected trouble from the Arab population, now that food had almost run out.

I sent the following telegram to the Government of India on 15th April:—

“*Re* all Indian troops of my force eating horse-flesh, I want all collectors of districts and political officers or residents of native states warned to summon *panchayats* in the districts of the classes enlisted<sup>4</sup> and to explain to them that permission was obtained from their religious leaders, Moulvis, Pandits, and Maharajah of Kioapur to eat horse-flesh, and that therefore no person will dare to cast a stone at them for their noble devotion to Government in this matter under pain of being proceeded against by Government. I also trust Government will be liberal in granting *jagirs* to Indian officers of this force who have helped Government in this dire extremity. General Townshend.”

I considered it necessary to send this telegram, as the Indian officers and soldiers were undoubtedly greatly prejudiced against eating horse-meat. As they said: “The fact will always be thrown in our teeth in our villages, and we shall not be able to marry our daughters”—which anyone acquainted with Indian caste prejudices will readily understand.

I received a telegram from Corps that the 3rd Division had captured at dawn the enemy's trenches on the line 18 C.O. 6 to 18 C.O. 9, and was continuing to gain ground against enemy's Beit Aiessa trenches, which were connected with the Chahela works. The telegram finished with the usual comforting intelli-

<sup>4</sup> Viz., Rajputs of Rajputana, Rajputs of the United Provinces, Dogras, Mahrattas, Jats, Sikhs, Gujars and Punjabi Hindus.

gence about the food supply by aeroplanes: "Loaded aeroplanes have been unable to rise owing to wind, but they will be despatched with supplies as soon as possible."

On 16th April I sent the following telegram to the Army Commander: "Secret. Personal. May I have an answer to my proposal in my 69/386-388/G of 10th April, *re* the *Sumana* running the blockade with six or seven hundred of the most useful men to the state? I want to know if Government thinks I should break out with that party or remain behind with the bulk of the Division and sick and wounded to go into captivity. There is no precedent to go on except that the Commander of a besieged garrison plays the correct *rôle* when he tries to break out, and this attempt at running the blockade would be a most hazardous one. To break out with the bulk of my force is, as I have explained before, with an impassable swift river of five hundred yards' breadth on three sides and on the one land side, a lake with submerged trenches and network of trenches beyond manned by the Turks, utterly impossible. My second in command, Sir Charles Melliss, volunteers to stay behind.

"I have every hope that the Relief Force will ram its way through, but after what has happened before I think it will be a close thing, and I am anxious about food business. Everything should be understood, as there will be no time at the end."

I might have added that if there were no flood like a lake on the only land side, and if it were dry

ground, even my British soldiers had not strength left to march as far as the Turkish trenches, carrying ammunition and great-coats—to say nothing of the Indians. It was impossible to put men on fatigue work, and soldiers fainted on sentry-go.

The reason why I asked if Government thought I should personally head this attempt to break out by running the gauntlet in the *Sumana* gunboat was that I felt it might be said I had left all my command to be taken—in other words, that I had abandoned them. Though the attempt by the gunboat would have been almost certain death, for we suspected then, and now know, that there was a chain across the river. If the conditions by land had permitted a sortie in force to cut our way out, there was, of course, no question as to what was my proper course. I should have commenced the sortie. But to attempt a break-out with seven hundred men on a steamer, leaving some eight thousand fighting-men behind in Kut, was a different matter, and I know no parallel case in history. Naturally I wanted an opinion from Headquarters. On the one hand if I broke out and escaped without being killed or wounded I might be of further use to the State; on the other hand there was captivity before me.

The aeroplanes began their food service this day, and in ideal weather and perfect conditions they put 3,350 lbs. of supplies into Kut instead of the stipulated 5,000 lbs. On 16th April up to 5 p.m. they had only put 1,333 lbs. instead of 5,000 lbs. Two bags also were dropped into the river, although there



was an enormous mark chalked out on the ground as a guide.

Accordingly, on 16th April I wired to Corps and repeated it to H.Q.: "This puts a new light on the question. If they cannot put in 5,000 lbs. a day, I see nothing for it but that a steamer should run the blockade with say fifty tons of supplies, which would give a reserve of twelve days' food at an eight-ounce ration, including town people. At once, on seeing that the aeroplanes could put nothing like 5,000 lbs. a day into the town I reduced my ration of meal to four ounces, which when cleaned meant only three ounces of food. Seven bags of rupees have been sent, but food must come first."

I added that the Turks must know now that food is being put into Kut by air, and they might turn their minds to possible blockade-running by food steamers and block the river channel by booms.

On 16th April Gorringer reported that he had rushed some Turkish picquets during the night, taking 43 prisoners and inflicting considerable loss.

The following prices at the auction of a dead officer's kit in Kut are instructive reading:—

A box of 100 cigarettes fetched 100 rupees; a small pair of inferior binoculars, 250; Arab tobacco, 48 rupees a pound—it is worth perhaps two shillings.

I paid 30 rupees for an ordinary three-shilling tin of kerosene oil. Chickens were 10 rupees each.

On 1st March I was buying wheat at 112 rupees the maund, and barley at 56 rupees the maund.

On 17th April (Monday) 5,000 bayonets reached

the Corps as reinforcements, and 1,250 more were *en route* by river steamers. The Corps composing the Tigris force now numbered

29,000 bayonets,  
1,500 sabres,  
133 guns.

The Indian troops at Kut were now very dejected, and there were desertions or attempted desertions every night. We had to shoot more of them. On this day three men of the 22nd Punjabis were made an example of; they had attempted to desert by running from our trenches towards the enemy.

Very heavy gun-fire was heard on the morning of 17th April. This proved to be 3rd Division driving the enemy out of the Beit Aiessa trenches, where they took a machine-gun and about 100 prisoners. Large numbers of the enemy, Corps reported, fell back from Beit Aiessa to Chahela Mounds. Gorringer added in his wire that by taking Beit Aiessa he got control of a number of water-cuts down stream of that locality, by means of which the Turks had been flooding much of the country to the east and south-east as far as the Umm-al-Brahm. The ground was now drying well.

In the morning I received a wire from Headquarters: "In the event of relief in time proving impracticable and should the attempt to run supplies to you fail, Army Commander is prepared to sanction the proposal contained in your telegram of 10th instant — namely, that *Sumana* shall try to run the

blockade, taking as many officers and other ranks as possible whose services are of most use to the State.

"Army Commander, however, makes this one exception, that he considers you yourself bound to remain behind in command of the garrison, though he would deeply regret loss of your services. In other respects he leaves the composition of the party entirely to you. It is obvious that should so much as a whisper of this project get about it would have the worst possible effect on the Indian troops.

"As stated above, the project is not to be put into effect except in the last extremity, and then only on receipt of a direct order from the Army Commander."

Headquarters also wired that the expedient of running the blockade would only be adopted as a last extremity. The Navy had only taken it on under this condition, and that state of affairs had by no means been reached. I answered this on the following day: "Quite so—but as your air service from afternoon of 15th April up to evening 17th April have only put in 5,000 lbs. supplies instead of 10,000 as promised you can understand my grave anxiety. I must again emphasise the fact that including town people I have close on 20,000 mouths to feed, which at four ounces a head means 5,000 lbs. a day. I have cut down meal ration to troops to four ounces, and my meal, bread stuff, and biscuits will be exhausted by the 25th, not including, of course, our air service deliveries."

A telegram from Headquarters repeated the news of the taking of Beit Aiessa by the 3rd Division with small loss; 2,300 Turks were found dead in the trenches, 180 prisoners, including eight Turkish officers, were taken, with two field-guns and five machine-guns. But the Turks had heavily counter-attacked during the night. Our line had been driven back from five to eight hundred yards. The 13th British Division had been brought from the other bank of the river in support, and our line was to be carried forward again after re-organisation of the brigades, which had become much mixed up. Further details were wired me later in the day, by which I learnt that the Turks started their heavy counter-attacks at 9 p. m. with 10,000 men of the 2nd Turkish Division, part of the 35th, and one battalion of the 45th Division. They came on in dense masses, as in their night attack on me at Ctesiphon. They had lost very heavily, 1,200 to 1,500 dead had been counted within five hundred yards of the 8th Brigade trenches. The losses in front of the 7th and 9th Brigades of the 3rd Division were known to be heavy, and the trenches were blocked with dead. Our casualties in the 8th Brigade were fairly slight, but the 7th and 9th Brigades lost heavily. In some places the Turks attacked twelve times and got within twenty yards of our lines. Gorringe estimated the Turkish loss as 4,000 in killed alone. They were led by German officers, some of whom were among the killed. The 13th Division was now moving forward

to attack the left of the enemy's trenches at Chahela. Gorringe appeared to have two divisions on the right bank and one on the left.

The aeroplanes suffered from engine trouble on 17th April, and it was too stormy for them to bring us food on the 18th; the stormy weather, the rain, the floods, and the mud, all in turn assisted the Turk to keep Kut in his clutch. My anxiety now regarding food was intense, for it was patent to all of us that the air food-supply service was a hopeless failure. When the weather was at all stormy they could not operate, and when it was fine they were effectively attacked by the German monoplane, or else they had engine trouble.

On 20th April this telegram from Army Commander was received at 8.05 a. m.:—"You can assure all ranks from me that their relief will be effected shortly. They must not relax their gallant efforts during the next few days, and I am quite sure that you will continue to inspire them by your courageous example."

This I published as a *communiqué* to the troops.

Gorringe had slightly advanced his line on the right bank, but I noticed that he had not got Chahela Mounds.

On 22nd April (Saturday) a very heavy bombardment was heard down river from 10 to 11 a. m. I wired to Headquarters for news. My force was now terribly anxious, and I myself had been rendered weak by a sort of ague I could not shake off.

The first aeroplane which came over that morning



(at 8 a. m.) dropped four packets all into the river near the mouth of the Hai. The second dropped another package into the river east of Kut town. I had had to report the air service several times for dropping bags of parcels and letters into the river; but four hundred pounds of food thrown into the river in a morning was a most serious loss to me!

A telegram from Headquarters brings this chapter to an end:—

“22nd April, 7.50 p. m. Much regret that the attack on Sannaiyat position this morning was repulsed. Gorringe, however, will not relax efforts.”

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE SURRENDER OF KUT

**T**HERE is very little left to say. It will be understood that the actual negotiations for the surrender must be kept secret. I wired to Headquarters on 23rd April:—

“We must face the situation, namely, that Gorringe with 30,000 men and 133 guns has been repulsed a second time, and I must suppose with heavy loss. We are now at 23rd April, my extreme limit of resistance is 29th, and Gorringe is not even at Sannaiyat. Therefore short of a miracle he cannot relieve me.”

I was of the opinion that the Army Commander should negotiate with Khalil Pacha on the ground of free withdrawal for my force, Kut being given up to the Turks. These would be perfectly honourable terms. I referred him to former correspondence on this subject. Khalil Pacha, I said, would probably insist on the force being paroled, in which case the Army Commander should try to get it paroled not to fight against the Turks only. If Gorringe was not strong enough in the next two or three days to unite his principal mass and with it strike at the enemy's

weakest point and run through, I thought the Army Commander should make up his mind to negotiate at once on the above lines.

Such was the state of the weakness of the troops that men fainted on sentry duty and could not work at any fatigue. It was pitiful to see all this. Personally, having a very strong constitution, I had kept well all through, except for feverish ague in the last few days, owing to the floods, I suppose. This, however, had not put me on the sick list. The garrison was now absolutely done. Men were dying at an average rate of fifteen a day, dysentery and scurvy claiming many victims.

On the night of 24th-25th April the *Julnar*, which was to run the blockade with food for us, left the Relief Force at midnight. Anxiously I waited on the roof of Headquarters House with Colonel Parr, my G.S.O., I. The *Julnar* got as far as Magasis ferry. At midnight we heard a terrific musketry fire here, and saw the flashes of guns and musketry. It lasted for half an hour; then all was silent. At 6.00 in the morning I could see the *Julnar* lying alongside the right bank of the river.

Thus the attempt to run the blockade had failed. I wired to Headquarters my heartfelt sympathy with Admiral Wemyss for the heroic effort of his brave bluejackets.

The *Julnar* had a crew from the Royal Navy under Lieutenant Firman, R.N., assisted by Lieutenant-Commander Cowley, R.N.V.R., the brave and skilful commander of the Lynch steamer *Mejidieh*, often

mentioned in this account of the operations in Mesopotamia, who had in that capacity rendered splendid service throughout the campaign. She carried 270 tons of supplies on board. She was discovered soon after leaving Felahieh, and was shelled most of the way. On reaching Magasis, the chain the Turks had stretched across the river—so we learnt afterwards from the enemy—fouled her screw, and, under a terrific fire of musketry, she was diverted into the bank. Cowley, I was told, was wounded on the bridge. Lieutenant Firman was killed, and the crew, including five wounded, were made prisoners. Cowley is supposed to have died of his wounds, though there were rumours afterwards that the Turks had shot him.

On 25th April, the Army Commander replied to my wire of the 23rd that he had asked permission of Government to negotiate on the lines I suggested. He was of the opinion that I should negotiate myself. "It is for consideration whether, if Government sanctions the opening of negotiations, you yourself will not be in a position to get better terms than any emissary of ours. You would, of course, be ordered by the Army Commander to open negotiations for surrender, the onus not lying with yourself. You are in the position of having conducted a gallant and successful defence." He mentioned that Admiral Wemyss, who had been consulted by him on the subject, considered that "With your prestige you are likely to get the best terms. We could, of course,

supply food as you might arrange. Please wire your views."

I replied at once that I would do whatever the Army Commander considered the best course for the public service. If he ordered me to open negotiations I should meet Khalil Pacha and suggest a six days' armistice for discussion of terms and to allow food to come up, with none of the forces engaged allowed to move from their present positions or lines of defence.

The result was that, much against my will, on 26th April, I had to negotiate with Khalil Pacha, knowing that I had not a biscuit up my sleeve to argue with, and knowing that Khalil Pacha knew I was *in extremis* for food. Twenty men were now dying daily of starvation. I was of the opinion that the G.O.C. Relief Force was the proper person to negotiate. He could menace, and he had the power to resume hostilities. Had I had any food I would have absolutely declined to negotiate, on the ground that it was not my business. But I had to get food at once or all my men would lie down and die.

The following telegram from the Commander-in-Chief in India was received through the Army Commander: "The Commander-in-Chief desires to express to the troops under Gorringe and Townshend his appreciation of their gallant efforts and their tenacious endurance in the face of a brave and determined enemy, and under exceptional physical difficulties. He knows that they will respond to the



next call of their leaders in the same spirit, and he looks forward to hearing that success will finally crown their endeavour. Special for Townshend:—The Commander-in-Chief desires you to convey to Townshend and his brave and devoted troops his appreciation of the manner in which they have undergone the sufferings and hardships of the siege, which he knows has been due to the high spirit of devotion to duty in which they met this call of their Sovereign and Empire.”

On 26th April I received an answer from Khalil Pacha. We both embarked in steam-launches and met on the river near the right flank of the Turkish entrenchments on the left bank.

Although he spoke in enthusiastic terms of the defence, which, he said, was heroic, and on a par with Osman Pacha's defence of Plevna, Khalil, instructed by Enver Pacha, insisted on unconditional surrender. He knew the state of my troops. He knew I had no food left. He knew that the men were dying, and that disease and scurvy were rife. Before any food was allowed in Kut we must march out into camp, and Khalil Pacha would confirm my telegram with Enver Pacha as to my paroling force.

After much negotiation all conditions were refused by Enver Pacha. My own personal liberty was offered on condition that I did not destroy my guns and material. Such conditions, of course, were impossible to accept. Finally, on 29th April, I destroyed my guns and all material, ammunition, etc., including the wireless installation. A Turkish bat-

talion marched into the town and took over the guards.

Khalil Pacha came to see me, and I offered him my sabre and pistols. He refused to take them, saying, "They are as much yours as ever they were."

Khalil told me that I should be sent to Constantinople and treated with the same honour as Osman Pacha, with whose defence of Plevna the Turks compared mine of Kut. He said I should be the honoured guest of the Turkish nation. My force would be sent to Asia Minor to be interned in places in a good climate near the sea.

The Turkish Government was determined to show the British force captured, to the world, as it were, partly as a national triumph, and partly as a *revanche* for the taking of Erzroum by the Russians. German Staff officers were there to see that the utmost humiliation was inflicted—as they had inflicted them on the French in 1870, in the cruel and humiliating conditions of surrender. I have always ascribed their utter neglect of all traditions of chivalry in war to revenge for their own disgraceful surrenders of fortresses and forces in Prussia in 1806, after their defeat at Jena, when great fortresses, garrisoned by thousands of troops, surrendered to the summons of a handful of dragoons—and the famous Blücher himself, with 14,000 men, surrendered Lübeck after a defence of a few hours.

There lies no dishonour for a commander and his troops, when they have done their duty according to

military laws, if the enemy imposes the hardest of conditions upon them. They are not the masters to fix and determine those conditions. In our case at Kut we had resisted for just on five months, and we were compelled to surrender not by the enemy but by famine. No terms can ever be expected when the enemy knows you have no more food left to argue with, and it will have been seen that I forewarned the Commander-in-Chief in Mesopotamia of this.

No! It depends whether your enemy is generous and chivalrous or the reverse whether you get honourable terms for a brave defence—terms such as the chivalrous Austrian General Melas granted to Masséna at Genoa, in 1800. The enemy's Commander-in-Chief, in short, must be a gentleman.

Conquered by famine, we had to submit and constitute ourselves prisoners. At different epochs in history, brave troops—commanded by generals like Masséna, Davoust, St. Cyr, Kléber—have experienced the same fate, which leaves no stain on military honour.

I trust history will say that we did our duty as Englishmen and soldiers up to the extreme limit of human nature. All that it was possible to do, to avoid this termination to our defence, was done. I have tried to show that it was impossible, without a miracle, much as I longed and longed, to make a supreme effort to break through the enemy's lines fortified as they were by an impassable river and by floods. As soon as I discovered that the enemy insisted on capitulation I blew up my guns, destroyed

all munitions and material of war, cut up harness, saddlery, and all equipment, and at the last moment had the bolts of the rifles thrown into the river.

It seems to me that I cannot better end the story of the defence of Kut than by quoting the speech of Lord Kitchener, then Minister for War, in the House of Lords, on May 4th, 1916, on perhaps the last occasion that he spoke in public. He quoted my last message before hoisting the white flag over Kut and burning the tattered Union Jack, which we had kept flying for just on five months, with my own hands, so that it might not fall into those of the enemy:—

“Lord Beresford asked the Secretary of State for War how many British prisoners were taken at the surrender of Kut, and whether it was a fact that the Turkish Commander-in-Chief was so impressed by the heroic defence made by General Townshend that he granted him the honours of war by allowing him to retain his sword.

“Earl Kitchener: I am glad that the noble and gallant lord has offered me this opportunity of paying a tribute to General Townshend and his troops, whose dogged determination and splendid courage have earned for them so honourable a record. (Cheers.) It is well-known how, after a series of brilliantly-fought engagements, General Townshend decided to hold the strategically important position at Kut-al-Amara, and it will not be forgotten that his

dispositions for the defences of that place were so excellent and so complete that the enemy, notwithstanding large numerical superiority, was wholly unable to penetrate his lines. Noble lords will not fail to realise how tense was the strain borne by those troops who, for more than twenty weeks, held to their posts under conditions of abnormal climatic difficulty, and on rations calculated for protraction to the furthest possible period until, as it was proved, imminent starvation itself compelled the capitulation of this gallant garrison, which consisted of 2,970 British and some 6,000 Indian troops, including followers.

“General Townshend and his troops, in their honourable captivity, will have the satisfaction of knowing that, in the opinion of their comrades, which I think I may say that this House and the country fully share, they did all that was humanly possible to resist to the last, and that their surrender reflects no discredit on themselves or on the record of the British and Indian Armies. (Cheers.)

“Every effort was, of course, made to relieve the beleaguered force, and I am not travelling beyond the actual facts in saying that to the adverse elements alone was due the denial of success, the constant rain and consequent floods not only impeding the advance, but compelling—in lieu of turning movements—direct attacks on an



almost impossibly narrow front. No praise would seem extravagant for the troops under Sir Percy Lake and Sir George Gorringe, and that they did not reap the fruit of their courage and devotion is solely due to the circumstances which fought against them. (Hear, hear.) The last message sent by General Townshend from Kut was addressed in these terms:—

“‘We are pleased to know that we have done our duty, and recognise that our situation is one of the fortunes of war. We thank you and General Gorringe and all ranks of the Tigris force for the great efforts you have made to save us.’

“I think the House, no less than the country at large, will endorse these words, and I am sure that those who held and those who strained every nerve to relieve Kut have alike earned our admiration and our gratitude. (Cheers.) I am glad to endorse what the noble lord has said in regard to the conduct of the Turkish Commander. (Cheers.)

“Lord Grenfell said the eulogy of General Townshend which had been pronounced would be very satisfactory to the House and to the Army, including the force which remained in Mesopotamia. In spite of difficulties of various kinds, sickness, want of food, and lack of medical stores, General Townshend and the Anglo-Indian Forces held Kut in the most admirable manner until, the food supplies being exhausted,

to save the lives of his men, General Townshend consented to capitulate. The defence of Kut by General Townshend and the determination of his troops would long be remembered with great admiration by the Army and the country. (Cheers.)" From *The Times*, May 5th, 1916.

Of that speech, which I did not read till I reached Constantinople, when I found it at the American Embassy, my command and I may well be proud. It showed that our beloved England considered we had done our duty. To me, personally, there was the additional sentiment that such praise came from an old commander, with whom and under whom I had served in the wars in the Sudan, and to whom I owed my promotion, first to Lieutenant-Colonel, then to Brigadier-General, and finally to Major-General.

I include here also letters of condolence, addressed to my wife by Colonel Fitzgerald and General Sir James Wolfe Murray.

"York House,

"St. James's.

"4th May, 1916.

"Dear Mrs. Townshend,

"Lord Kitchener asks me to tell you how much he feels for you in your trouble, but that you must realise how splendidly your husband has done, in the great stand he made at Kut. He is paying a tribute to him in a statement he is making to-day in the House of Lords.

"Please accept also my own small tribute of admiration for what he has done. When the story comes to be told people will realise, and it will go down to history as a wonderful achievement.

"If I can assist you in communicating with him in any way please let me know.

"Yours sincerely,

"O. FITZGERALD."<sup>1</sup>

"Hotel Vandyke,

"Cromwell Road,

"Queen's Gate, S.W.

"30th April, 1916.

"Dear Mrs. Townshend,

"At length the end has come; and your husband and his brave troops have had to succumb to their hard fate. They and he have covered themselves with glory, and have done their duty as everyone who knows him knew they would do, to the last, under his leadership. It is not for me either to impute blame, or to give praise; but I feel sure that the latter will be universal for your husband's conduct throughout all the course of the operations.

"But while the thoughts of all his countrymen and countrywomen will be with him and his men, let one just say how much the thoughts of many of us have been with you, in all this anxious, wearying time: for you all this terrible suspense has been especially try-

<sup>1</sup> Colonel FitzGerald, Military Secretary to Lord Kitchener, went down in H.M.S. *Hampshire*.

ing; and we—who know you—have admired the brave face with which you have borne your trial, and have—like him—kept your end up to the last.

“Thank God he comes out with honour and with life; and let us hope that his enemy will render the same homage to a gallant soldier, who has fought it out against them till further resistance became impracticable, as all his countrymen do, and treat him honourably till we get him back amongst us once more.

“Yours sincerely,

“J. WOLFE MURRAY.”<sup>2</sup>

I was to proceed to Constantinople, Khalil Pacha informed me. He put a Thorneycroft launch at my disposal to take me from Kut-al-Amara to Baghdad, the first stage in the long journey through Mesopotamia and Asia Minor to reach Europe. Accompanied by Colonel Isàkh Bey, Colonel Parr, and Captain Morland, I went on board, and, as we passed the place where the remnant of the gallant old Sixth Division was encamped, officers and men lined the bank and cheered me long as I went by. Tears filled my eyes as I stood at attention at the salute. Never shall I have such a command again. Never had any man a finer command. I loved the Sixth Division with all my heart, and they gave me their confidence to the last.

The last message I received by wireless before destroying the station was the following, from the

<sup>2</sup> General Sir James Wolfe Murray died in October, 1919.

officers and men of the Royal Navy and Relief Force who had formerly been under my command in the Mesopotamian campaign:—

“General Townshend. 29th April, 1916.

“We, the officers and men of the Royal Navy, who have been associated with the Tigris Corps, and have, many of us, so often worked with you and your gallant troops, desire to express our heartfelt regret at our inability to join hands with you and your comrades in Kut.

“CAPTAIN NUNN,  
“G.A.M.”

Finally, I asked Khalil Pacha to send my faithful fox-terrier “Spot” down to the British force to my friend, Sir Wilfred Peck, so that he might reach home. He had served me faithfully. He was with me in the Battles of Kurna and Kut-al-Amara, he was at Ctesiphon and in the retreat, and he killed many cats during the defence of Kut. He reached England safely, and I met him again on my return to my home in Norfolk.





## PART V

CONSTANTINOPLE



## CHAPTER XIX

### A PRISONER OF WAR

I LEFT Baghdad on 12th May, 1916, in company with Colonel Parr, Captain Morland, and Colonel Isàkh Bey, a Circassian, who was the Turkish officer in charge of me, my Portuguese cook, an Indian servant, and two British orderlies. We went by rail to Suwarra, the rail-head, where we arrived at 8.30 p. m., and were given quarters in the railway station by the German station-master. Leaving Suwarra by road, and driving in crazy old "Arabans" and an old Chippendale victoria, we reached Tekrit, on the right bank of the Tigris, at 11 p. m., by a rough and rugged road over a monotonous plain, in places undulating and accented by stony ravines. At Tekrit we had to rest our weary, half-starved little horses until 3 p. m. on the 14th, and I shot four or five couple of sandgrouse before breakfast for our mess. At that hour we started again and reached the Turkish fortified post of Seriniyeh at midnight.

On the morning of 15th May I shot six couple of sandgrouse before breakfast. We did not start till 3 p. m., and we halted at 4 o'clock on the morning of the 16th at a place where a small brackish stream

crossed the track, where we slept in our carts. Here we overtook a party of about forty ragged and weary British and Indian prisoners, who had been taken from Gorrings's force, and included the survivors of the *Julnar*. They were under Sub-Lieutenant Reid, R.N.R., who told us they had to pay for donkey hire, and that one of their number was ill. Before we moved off I made Isàkh Bey give Reid fifteen liras for expenses of this nature, and deliver a severe lecture to the Turkish officer in charge of the prisoners. This was all I could do.

At 2 p. m. on 16th May we reached Kila Shergat, on the right bank of the Tigris. Many of the houses of this place are of white marble, and it is inhabited by a great colony of storks. It is the site of an ancient fortified city, of which the ruined walls of the citadel or "reduit" alone remain; there is also the perfect trace, with some columns still standing, of a palace or temple, which has been excavated by the German antiquarians, who have been at work in Mesopotamia for some years past. They have worked busily inside the citadel, and I was told that they have found many treasures. It was a great treat to reach the river again, for the road had run many miles inland from it, and to have a swim.

We resumed our journey at 5 a. m. on 17th May and reached Gazàra arrest-house, on the right bank of the Tigris, at 11.45 a. m. Enver Pacha, with a large suite of German and Austrian staff-officers, passed down the river on rafts or "killiks" at 5 p. m.,



on his way to Baghdad to confer with Khalil Pacha. Motor-cars and baggage were loaded on the rafts.

On 18th May we reached Hammam Ali, a small village with a bath for rheumatic people. There is petroleum all about this country, and we encamped alongside a petrol spring. We had much difficulty on this day's march, crossing many small streams in boggy depressions, in which the carts stuck. The baggage had to be unloaded in order to extricate them.

At 11 a. m. on 19th May we reached Mosul. Here we lodged in the club-house of the Turkish officers of the garrison, which is situated close to the barracks in a little garden on the bank of the river. Opposite, on a plateau on the left bank, stood the ruins of Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrians and the home of Semiramis, the great queen.

Mosul is a large Arab city on the right bank of the Tigris, the centre of a country which is the veritable granary of Asia Minor. It is estimated that the Mosul district could easily feed an army of 70,000 men annually with meat and grain.

We started again from Mosul on 22nd May, a day and a half having been passed by Isàkh Bey in procuring transport to take us on. We now had three motor-lorries, and we made for Ras-al-Ain, the rail-head.

The Turkish line of communications from Constantinople to Baghdad *viâ* Mosul, which was the route we were following, is some 1,255 miles in length. It runs from Baghdad *viâ* Mosul, Ras-al-Ain,

Aleppo, Tarsus, over the Taurus Mountains, Bozanti, Konia, and Afion Kara Hissar to Constantinople. In May, 1916, the rail-head towards Baghdad was Ras-al-Ain. Between this point and Samarra, whence the railway ran into Baghdad, a gap of three hundred miles had to be crossed.

The remaining unfinished gaps in the railway at the time of which I write, were:—

(a) Islahi-Marmouri—some forty miles of hill-road, crossing the Amanus Mountains.

(b) Tarsus-Bozanti—about forty-five miles over the Taurus Mountains.

We negotiated both these gaps on motor-lorries.

The road between Samarra and Mosul was bad, but it presented no difficulty for a railway. The Turks used "killiks" (skin rafts) between Mosul and Baghdad, as this section of the Tigris is very rapid, the river in many places reminding me of the Indus on the north-west frontier of India.

On 22nd May, the day that we left Mosul, we halted at Nisibin at 6 p. m., having experienced difficulties at drifts on the road. This was a fortified town in the days of the Roman general Belisarius, who commanded the expedition sent by Justinian to reconquer Mesopotamia from the Persians in 541 A.D., and used Nisibin as his advanced base.

We left in motor-lorries at 9 a. m. on 23rd May, and did the seventy miles to Ras-al-Ain by 4 p. m. We passed some 4,000 Turkish infantry on the road, who were marching to Baghdad.

Ras-al-Ain was a small village with a standing detachment of German engineers and transport corps. The German soldiers were young and of fine physique, in brand new khaki uniforms and equipped with odd bullet-shaped helmets. We had met so many German officers on the road between Baghdad and Ras-al-Ain that we had no doubt in our minds that they intended to make Turkey an appanage of the German Empire, and to found an Eastern Empire in Mesopotamia. The Germans were even manufacturing the gold Turkish liras, and they were attaching their officers to all Turkish regiments and battalions. In conversation with us the Turkish officers deeply resented this, and said openly that Enver Pacha was evidently in the hands of the Germans.

On 25th May, we left Ras-al-Ain by train at 6 a. m. and reached Aleppo at 6.30 p. m., a journey of some 180 miles. The Euphrates is crossed by a bridge of the Forth Bridge type at Jerrabus.

I was met at the station of Aleppo by a large number of Turkish officers and gendarmerie, who were drawn up on the platform and saluted me. We drove to Barron's Hotel, where it was a great luxury to have a proper bath, good food, a bedroom and clean sheets. I was also given a private sitting- and dining-room.

During our stay at Aleppo I visited the ancient citadel, which interested me very much. It evidently dates from the time of the Crusaders, or shortly after; its fortifications are of the Middle Ages, and the walls—of an enormous thickness—are in a splendid

state of preservation, as also is the palace with its great hall of audience. The citadel stands on an isolated hill in the middle of the city. It is surrounded by a vast ditch, revetted with stone from the foot of the walls to the bottom of the ditch, and it is therefore impossible to escalate.

A high bridge like a viaduct—I suppose about a hundred and fifty feet in height—crosses the vast ditch from the fortified bridge-head to the castle. I have read, in some novel or other, of a duel between two knights on horseback who charged each other from the opposite ends of this bridge, which has no balustrade and is very narrow. All I can say is that they had *some* nerves!

The Turkish General Commanding at Aleppo, Chefik Pacha, a man of great stature, was very polite to me, and called on me at the hotel, accompanied by some of his officers. He was a friend of Colonel Isàkh Bey, who seemed to be a most popular man wherever we went. I also met the American Consul, Mr. Jackson, who, so I was told at Constantinople, had helped British and French prisoners a great deal.

We left Aleppo by train at 6 a. m. on 29th May, and arrived at Islàhi at midday. Here the railway ended, and we had to cross the mountains, under which the railway is being tunnelled, to Amànus, the next rail-head. This range of hills is called the Amànus “mountains,” but where we crossed the pass we were certainly not over 5,000 feet above sea level. We found ourselves in a beautiful country of hills, valleys and streams, the hills of greystone covered

with scrub. Our transport was German motor-lorries with German chauffeurs, part of a large motor-lorry depot of 250 to 300 cars. We reached Marmourie, where we got the rail again, at 5.30 p. m.

We left the next morning at 9 a. m. by train, and arrived at Tarsus about 5.30 p. m. We were to stay for the night with the Turkish General Commanding at Tarsus, another friend of Colonel Isàkh Bey, and had to motor some two or three miles to the town from the railway station. The German officer in charge of the motor transport wished to drive me to the town, and an altercation took place between him and Isàkh Bey, who refused to let the German get into the car, saying that he was in sole charge of me, and that the German must remember that he was in the country of the Turks, not in Germany, and could give no orders here. Isàkh was so menacing and furious that the German submitted, and we drove off in triumph without him.

The Turkish General had a good dinner for us, and he and Isàkh passed the evening in round abuse of the Germans. The General told me that British warships had bombarded him at long range a short time before, doing no damage, as his troops were concealed behind small hills. They used to damage the telegraph wire, but it was always repaired in two or three hours during the night.

We left Tarsus the next morning, 31st May, in a German motor-car, with a German chauffeur, for Bozanti, the next rail-head. The Germans had about 150 cars and lorries working the Bozanti-Tarsus sec-



tion. We travelled over the Taurus Mountains by a most beautiful winding valley, which reminded me of the Sind Valley in Kashmir, through great pine forests and along mountain streams, with great peaks and cliffs towering above us. We passed through a rocky defile, very precipitous and narrow, which is named Alexander the Great's Gate. Here is a tablet of stone cut out on the face of the rock with an inscription by Alexander to commemorate the march of his army through this defile; Belisarius and Godfrey de Bouillon also took this road. From this we debouched into a great wide valley bordered by pine-covered hills, which resembled a valley in the Austrian Tyrol.

At Bozanti, Enver Pacha's special train was drawn up, and he sent for me to see him in his carriage. He spoke in a very flattering way of the defence of Kut, and of my ability in advancing nearly to Baghdad with what he called *une poignée d'hommes*. He said that I should be the honoured guest of his nation, which appreciated the way I had done my duty to my country. I reminded him of his offer to me in a telegram to go home on parole if I did not destroy my guns. I told him that it was impossible for me to purchase my liberty in that way, and so I had destroyed them, but now I hoped he would allow me to be exchanged and go to England. He said that perhaps that would be done, he would see. I must not grieve at being a prisoner, it was the fortune of war. I remarked that I knew that, and that during the Napoleonic Wars half Napoleon's marshals had be-

come prisoners of war at some time or other, and that it always happened in war if the leaders have to be in the front line. He said he would see me on my arrival at Constantinople, as he was on his way there, and, shaking hands cordially with me, ended the interview. A large staff of German and Austrian officers was with him, and as I walked along the train many of them saluted me, and I saw others snapshotting me with kodaks.

I noticed that the bulk of rolling stock on the railway from Bozanti to Constantinople was Belgian; all the trucks were marked "Brussels," and had the numbers of men and horses painted on them in French. The locomotives were German, as were the engine-drivers, stokers and guards.

We arrived at Constantinople on 3rd June, our twenty-second day from Baghdad. For some time we were running along the shore of the Gulf of Ismid in the Sea of Marmora. We passed several picturesque little towns nestling under capes and cliffs, and we noticed considerable numbers of coast craft and fishing craft.

We arrived at the large terminus of Haidar Pacha at Skutari, opposite Constantinople, at about 5.30 p.m. On the platform I was met by the G.O.C., 1st Turkish Army, his staff, and many War Office officials. There were also large crowds of people in the station. Isàkh Bey, and a Turkish naval A.D.C., Tewfik Bey, who had been specially attached to me, and had come to meet me at Haidar Pacha, introduced me to all the officers, and I had a reception

and cigarettes and coffee in the waiting-room of the station. I wondered at this reception of me, a prisoner of war. I was treated with as much respect and honour as if I had come to inspect Constantinople, I thought.

Tewfik Bey, who talked English well, then took us on board a naval steam-launch, placed at my disposal after the reception, and, with our baggage and servants, we steamed for Prince's Islands, which lie about ten miles from Constantinople in the Sea of Marmora. A house had been selected for me on the Island of Halki, which forms one of the group. It was my first visit to Constantinople, which I saw in front of me with all its minarets and palaces, the deep blue of the Sea of Marmora, and the fairy-like Prince's Islands, dotted with villas and woods—all most beautiful. On arrival at Halki, where the Naval School is situated, we drove up to my house, which was situated on a high cliff amongst the woods, and which had been taken for me by Government. It was announced to me by Tewfik Bey that all entertainment was at the expense of the Turkish Government.

On 5th June, I was taken across to Constantinople to see Enver Pacha at the War Office. Enver is a good-looking and soldierly man of, I should say, 37 or 38 years of age. He was very smart in his khaki uniform. His manner was charming; he told me that I was to consider myself a guest of Turkey, and that the Sultan had ordered that I was to be given the honours and salutes of an army corps commander.

I was at liberty to go where I pleased, he said, to Constantinople, Pera, etc., or wherever I chose. All he asked in return was that if I were tempted to escape I would warn him that I wanted to get away! I was astonished at his request, but I laughed and said, "Yes, I will do so." I did not give my parole, nor did he ask for it. To give parole would have necessitated signing the parole, and this I was resolved not to do.

Enver asked me if I would like my wife and daughter to come and join me in captivity. I thanked him, and said I would. He at once ordered a telegram to be sent to the British Foreign Office, saying that the Sultan gave his permission for this.

At Constantinople I soon met Izzet Pacha, of Cairo. He had been prevented from returning to Egypt by the sudden outbreak of war, which found him at Constantinople, as it was his custom every year to pass a couple of months or so there, while on his way back from London or Paris to Cairo. He had a pretty villa on the Bosphorus.

I had known him when I was in the Egyptian Army and he had met my people in London. He was always most kind to me, and, when he heard that Kut had fallen, he spoke to Enver and other Turkish Ministers on my behalf. He told me that he had also suggested to Talaat and Enver that I should be allowed to live at the British Embassy at Pera when my wife arrived, as it would be a more suitable residence for her than Halki or Prinkipo. Enver allowed me to send a telegram to the British Foreign

Office in this matter, but the F.O. answered that, as I was under an armed guard, it would not do to turn the British Embassy into a place of internment. As the Austrian Government also refused permission for her to pass through their territory to reach me, the matter had to be dropped.

On 27th June I visited the American Embassy, of which Mr. Philip was in charge; he was immensely kind to me, and I often used to lunch with him there, where I could read all the London papers.

Owing to the awful misery of mind I went through each morning on waking a prisoner, out of the war through no fault of mine, I was soon in a very bad state of mind, and for some time wrote most bitter letters to everyone. I mention this matter to show how I was tried, and, if some of my enemies in high places read this, perhaps they will pardon my too outspoken comments. I was seeing red at the time and I felt utterly reckless of my future. The only consolation I had in my misery was in study, and during my captivity I wrote a book on strategy and higher tactics which I had projected for some years, but never could get time for. Luckily I had all my notes with me. My eight or nine hours' study a day saved me from going mad. I thank God I was always a student. In peace time my minimum hours of study are four hours every day in the week except Sunday, and it was not hard to double this in captivity. It was my only means of consolation.

I also imbued my fellow-captive, Captain Morland, with a thirst for the Napoleonic doctrine, and he be-



came as fanatical as I on the subject. An interesting form of study was to construct problems to solve by putting oneself in Enver's place as regards the distribution of the armies on the various fronts.

About this time Germans began to swarm in Constantinople and Pera. The hotels were overflowing with officers and business men, who took over banks and many shops and business houses. They even managed the theatres and cinemas; they hired sea side villas at Prinkipo and Halki, and were accompanied by many wives and mothers-in-law! Many German motor-cars, filled with young German officers, dashed about the streets. Many of them, one could see, were temporary officers or civilians put into uniform. Hardly any, I suppose, had ever been in a motor-car before, much less owned one. And there were many German naval officers and seamen as well as troops.

The Germans took over the Turkish war-ships, and the Turkish navy fell entirely in the hands of the Germans. The *Goeben* had a crew of a thousand German officers and men, and the *Breslau* one of three hundred, for though these ships had been publicly presented to the Turks, and flew the Turkish flag, they had never been handed over.

The Turkish officers understood plainly by August, 1916, that they would never get rid of the Germans, who had some 14,000 troops in Constantinople and the environs, and a further 14,000 in Asia Minor. They hated the Germans for their swagger and insolence, but liked the Austrians, who were mostly gentlemen, and naturally gentlemen, just as the Ger-

mans are naturally bounders. It was at this time that I first began to ponder how I might take advantage of this state of affairs. Many Turkish officers talked most freely with me, and I began to indulge the hope that I should see a revolution in Constantinople. In such a case I determined to play a leading part.

On 7th October, 1916, I wrote to Generals Melliss and Delamain who, with other senior officers, were interned at Broussa, on the subject of Enver Pacha's statement that the Turkish officer prisoners of war, at Cairo, were being treated badly by the British. This was his reply when his attention was drawn to the condition of our sick soldiers on the road from Baghdad to their prison camps in Asia Minor. I informed them that I had read that the treatment of our soldiers in Turkey had been discussed in the House of Commons, more than two months before. The American Embassy had also asked permission for one of their officials to visit the British prisoners of war along the line of communications. The American Embassy had done their utmost, and I cannot say how grateful I was to Mr. Philip for his sympathy and work in this matter. Anyone who has travelled over the road from Baghdad to Afion Kara Hissar, in Asia Minor, and remembers that our soldiers, worn out and emaciated at the fall of Kut, had to *walk* it, will not wonder that numbers died—the bulk of dysentery.

Prior to leaving Kut I warned Khalil Pacha that our men were not able to walk. I said if they were

forced to march they would die in such a climate, at such a time of year, and in such a state of health. I have his letter in return, in which he guarantees that every care should be taken of the men, and that they should be transported by steamer to Baghdad and in carts beyond. I ascribe the blame and guilt of these cruelties to the German staff-officers with the Turks, and would exonerate Khalil Pacha entirely.

Large quantities of thick clothing had been sent off by rail to the prison camps by the American Embassy, in September, and 1,800 suits of heavy underclothes went off to Ras-al-Ain at the end of September. A large quantity of thick clothing started by rail on 12th October for Afion Kara Hissar.

My former residence on Halki became too cold at the end of September, so on 19th October, I was transferred to the summer residence of the British Consul at Constantinople, Mr. Hamson, on the island of Prinkipo. It was a sort of country vicarage house, situated on the cliffs on the north side of the island, with a very pretty and well-wooded garden about a quarter of a mile long and shut off from the road by a high wall.

The sea bathing at Halki had been a great treat, and every morning Morland, Tewfik and I used to run down to the rocks and have the most delicious swims in the clear and beautiful blue sea. In my new house I found the same guard of Turkish sailors, and in addition a police station was installed next door.

On 14th November I received a wire from Sir George Armstrong, sent after the fall of Kut, with

what looks like the date 20th May, 1916. It had evidently been sent by Headquarters on the Tigris through the Turkish lines to me—and had reached me on this date! In my diary I have written: “Had I received this wire months ago, what anguish of mind it would have saved me!”

*“Auprès de l’armée Ottomane le Gouvernement Britannique annonça au Parlement qu’il devait rester assuré qu’aucune circonstance relative à la défense si héroïque et si habile de Kut-al-Amara par le général Townshend ne manquera leur considération aussi sympathique que soigneuse. Etant au courant de tout, je suis persuadé que votre position actuelle, votre renommé, et votre avenir ne laissent rien à désirer.”*

“2nd March, 1917, Friday.<sup>1</sup> It is now known officially that Kut-al-Amara has been retaken by the British, though it has been rumoured here since 26th February. There had been heavy fighting in its neighbourhood at Felahieh for two or three weeks previously, and the Turks have now retired above Kut-al-Amara. This is a consolation for me. The Turks tell me that Maude had over 100,000 men against 40,000 Turks at the outside, and say it was impossible to hold back the British any longer.

“12th March. It is rumoured that America has declared war against Germany.

“14th March, Wednesday. It is all over Constantinople that the British have taken Baghdad.

<sup>1</sup> Excerpts taken direct from my diary are put between quotation-marks without further reference.

This news seems correct. All the people are talking about it. There has been very heavy fighting. Tewfik has been told the British have 7 divisions and 500 guns. A considerable difference in size from the force I was given to take Baghdad with!

"I have been given the papers from 19th January up to 22nd February, by the American Embassy. These included the breaking off of diplomatic relations between America and Germany."

The revolution in Russia came as very bad news to us on 18th March, at Constantinople. All the Turks and Germans were radiant, and said that it was the end of the war, as the Entente could not continue without Russia.

The news of the fall of Baghdad cast a gloom over the Turks at Constantinople, though it was never officially announced. I was told by several officers that Maude's force consisted of seven divisions and 500 guns, say, 90,000 combatants, and the Turkish forces were approximately the same as when Kut fell. No one thought of blaming the Turkish Commander-in-Chief in Mesopotamia—my old opponent, Khalil Pacha, whose prestige was in no wise diminished. On 29th and 30th March, flags decorating the streets announced a defeat of the British in Syria, under General Sir Archibald Murray, at Gaza, on the 26th and 27th.

On 6th April it was announced that America had declared war against Germany. This painfully impressed the Turks as to the probable result of the war.

Constantinople was now (June, 1917) more and



more German. German officers were in all Turkish regiments, in the War Office, and about the person of Enver Pacha, who was entirely under their thumb. The Turkish debt to Germany now amounted to four hundred million pounds, and it was impossible that it could ever be repaid.

On Friday and Sundays I found it impossible to go out at Prinkipo on account of the German and Austrian holiday crowds. They were hand-in-glove with the Greeks and Jews of Constantinople, who in general paid great respect to the Germans. Friday, being the Turkish holiday, was kept by the Greeks in addition to Sunday, so that for two days a week Prinkipo was impossible. Morland and I used as a rule to walk round the island twice a day for exercise, beginning the day with a swim off the rocks in my garden and sometimes a sail, when Tewfik used to take us for a cruise on one of the yachts of the Naval School.

The profiteering at Constantinople was on a monstrous scale. Members of the Government made large fortunes rigging the sugar, or tobacco, or mutton, or potato markets.

"22nd July. General Falkenhayn has arrived at Constantinople, and I am told he is to command the German-Turk forces in Asia Minor, with the mission of retaking Baghdad.

"Two English aeroplanes visited Constantinople the other night. They nearly succeeded in bombing the *Goeben*, and they sank one Turkish destroyer, killing some 26 men and wounding ten more, dam-

aged another destroyer and nearly got the German liner *General*, which was also lying in the Golden Horn and accommodating a large number of German staff-officers."

On 5th August I saw the English papers and read about the Mesopotamian Inquiry in the London press. It was admitted and proved that a committee of politicians, unbacked and unsupported by expert military opinion, over-ruled military warning by the War Office, and found that my advance on Baghdad with 13,000 combatants (of whom only 8,500 were bayonets) was most desirable, although I should be nearly four hundred miles from the sea with no support! Moreover, Mesopotamia was a secondary theatre, and on principle should have been held on the defensive with a minimum force so as to strengthen our forces in France, the principal theatre.

On 11th August I had an interview with Enver Pacha at the Admiralty. We had a long talk, and he was very friendly. He told me that I should have gone home to England a year before but for the Germans, who would not agree.

"I wanted to send you home directly after Kut," he said, "but the truth is, General, that the Germans would not hear of it, saying you were *un haut personnage* in England, and your arrival would have a political effect!"

On 12th August I swam from my garden on the island of Prinkipo across the Halki Channel to the Naval School on the island of Halki, at least a mile and a quarter, in forty minutes. This beat my swim

round St. Michael's Mount in Cornwall in 1895, just after I had come home from Chitral. About this time I began to be shadowed by plain clothes police to a greater extent than I had been during my captivity. I used often to amuse myself at Prinkipo by giving these detectives the slip during a walk, and, climbing the hills, drop down on the other side of the ridge and go home by a different way.

"24th September. Haidar Pacha, the railway station at Skutari, was destroyed by a great fire last night. From Prinkipo, one could see at dusk flames darting upwards in great tongues of fire. The fire originated by a steam crane lifting bombs out of a lighter on a quay, alongside the railway station, breaking. There was an explosion, and instantly the great station was in flames. Trains loaded with petrol were waiting to proceed to Aleppo for the Baghdad expedition. About 1,000 people lost their lives. There were great quantities of ammunition and projectiles in the station, and the shells went off like rockets, and the projectiles fell among the shipping in the Bosphorus. The damage done is estimated at five million pounds."

I have stated that I had been careful not to give my parole. Enver Pacha had told me I was free to go whenever I wished, all he said he would ask me was to tell him if I felt I could no longer remain.

Directly I had made up my mind to go I conveyed to Enver Pacha in at least half a dozen letters on the question of getting exchanged, etc., that I could no longer live the life of a prisoner of war, that the

mental strain was too much for me, that if I didn't get home and to work again I should go mad. I ought to mention that his promise that I could go where I liked was a farce. I was most carefully watched, and could not go to Constantinople without taking one of the two Turkish aide-de-camps with me. They lunched and dined with us and stayed in the same house, while some naval seamen, under the name of orderlies for my use, were in reality a guard over me.

I now began to think over the whole situation and I determined to escape *coûte que coûte*, for I had no hope whatever of an exchange. It will be understood that there are obvious reasons which prevent my giving the story of the three efforts I made to escape, when the events happened so recently as the summer of 1918, and therefore might involve people who helped me at Constantinople. It is sufficient to say that the efforts were exciting but unsuccessful, owing to bad luck, force of circumstances, and the Turkish habit of procrastination. At the same time the attempts were not discovered by the Turkish authorities or by the officers in charge of me.

Far from relaxing my determination to escape, I put a new plan on foot at the end of August, and reckoned it would take a month to arrange. In my diary I find: "We have another iron in the fire, thank God! This will not depend upon aircraft and weather conditions but on *ourselves*, on our right arms and rifles."

About this time British aircraft frequently raided

Constantinople, but no feeling was aroused amongst the Turkish population, who openly said, "You see, the British are not the people to burn our city. *They* respect the lives of innocent women and children." The only effect this had was to get me watched more carefully, for the frequent presence of aeroplanes caused the Turks to discuss the possibilities of my escape by seaplane, and on two occasions there were actually reports in the papers that I had escaped in this manner.

My failure in the three efforts alluded to made me all the more determined to escape; life was no longer possible in the mental hell I was going through. Morland was of the same mind, and we had now made sound arrangements and a sound plan; we had our revolvers, plenty of ammunition, and a band of some twenty brigands was hired and a boat procured and concealed on the coast opposite Mitylene. We were to reach the shore of the Sea of Marmora near Panderma, and there join the brigands, who would have ponies and mules ready for the ride across the ninety miles to the coast and the concealed boat in which we could pull across to the island of Mitylene.

We had considered a scheme of reaching the Caucasus *viâ* Batoum, but the above plan was eventually adopted as being the simplest. But it took a long while to arrange, for Never Do To-day What You Can Put Off Until To-morrow is the favourite proverb of Turkey.

On 28th August a great fire broke out in the city



of Constantinople, and raged for two days. About 20,000 houses were burnt and thousands of people rendered homeless.

It was at the end of August that a very influential Turk, who was well in with the Government and Enver, told me confidentially that the Turks would never let me go; they had amused me with promises and honourable treatment. "Whatever convention is made as to an exchange of prisoners of war (which was talked of at the time) they will hang on to you." He said he knew what he was talking about; it had often been discussed amongst the members of the Turkish Government, and "they intend to use you as a hostage if the worst comes to the worst."

I had not the slightest doubt of the truth of what the Pacha said, and it made me quits with Enver, who had fed me with stories of how he wanted to let me go but the Germans would not allow it, and so forth, *ad infinitum*.

The War Office under Enver was no improvement on the War Office of Nazim Pacha, assassinated before the war. The only difference was that in place of the peaceful, siesta-like calm of the pre-war administration, bustle and confusion were mistaken for the activity of business.

The scandals connected with the Quartermaster-General's department at the Turkish War Office during my captivity were extraordinary. The Quartermaster-General had made himself a millionaire by corrupt dealings with those who furnished the army with supplies, munitions, arms, and equipment; young

Turkish officers in his department, known not to possess a fourpenny-piece before the war, used now to buy villas at Prinkipo for several thousands of pounds. A Turkish staff-officer himself told me of one of the transactions of a certain Turkish general that he witnessed, when the general was contracting to feed an army corps:—

“What is your price for dates?” he asked an Arab contractor.

“Two piastres the oke.”

“Well, I’ll give you six piastres the oke, if you will give me a receipt at twelve piastres!”

So everyone was pleased.

The state of corruption was appalling. The Turkish Air Force consisted of a very few machines and an enormous number of officers, in a fantastic uniform, which was more suited to musical comedy than air work. Being generally the sons of well-to-do business men they simply joined the Air Force in order to remain in the restaurants at Pera and get out of going to one of the fronts, more especially the dreaded ones of Syria and Mesopotamia. Even the contemptible Constantinople press openly drew attention to this scandal, when the British were continually raiding the city from their base at Mudros.

We were in a jeweller’s shop in Pera one day, when a Turk came in, who wished to buy a gold watch chain. The German woman who owned the shop asked him eighteen liras! Whereupon the Turk remonstrated, saying that the chain was not worth more

than five or six liras (or pounds). "If you give me three golden liras you shall have the chain," said the woman, "but the price is eighteen if you pay in paper notes."

If one took a British gold sovereign or a gold Turkish lira and sold it in the market one could get five lira notes. The official rate of exchange was 130 piastres for the lira, owing to Germany having put a fictitious value on the lira note, since she had lent Turkey well over four hundred millions of liras. When we wanted money in Constantinople we used to cash an English cheque either with the Minister of the Netherlands, or with Mr. J. A. Sykes, an English merchant who remained there.

"22nd September. A raid of British aeroplanes over Constantinople last night; the fusillade of anti-aircraft guns lasted for a quarter of an hour. One of the machines, a seaplane, came down with engine trouble after the raid on the sea close to Malteppe, a little town on the Asiatic shore opposite Prinkipo; the three officers in her were taken prisoners.

"London papers up to 7th September show that the Germans are being heavily punched by the Allied armies under Foch and have lost 150,000 prisoners! Which shows me they are in full retreat. The whole of Germany is now completely upset and their Parliament declares that the time has passed when Cabinet secrecy and secret measures can be permitted. There are 29,000 German soldier deserters in Berlin. Two divisions (one Bavarian and the other Silesian) have

had to be sent back from the front to Germany for open mutiny. There has also been a mutiny amongst the crews of submarines."

My diary of 25th, 26th and 27th September is taken up with the plan of escape which was now nearly ready.<sup>2</sup>

"28th September, Saturday. The Turks and Germans have had a regular beating from Allenby in Syria and their army is in full flight. The English have taken Damascus! This is of great political effect, Damascus coming second only to Constantinople. Thus all Syria is now in the hands of the British. The Bulgarians have been heavily defeated by our Salonica Army and are in full retreat. Bulgaria has proposed an armistice to the commander of the Salonica Army. This has caused consternation in Turkey. Ministers sat in council here all yesterday and last night; troops are being hurried to the frontier. The Turks talk openly against the Germans, except perhaps the actual government party, and it is hinted that Enver himself is changing his opinion about them. The actual majority of the Turks are for the Entente, but all fear the German bayonets at Constantinople. As far as I can ascertain, the German garrison at Constantinople is a division, grouped in mixed detachments in the suburbs on both sides of the Bosphorus, so as to control the city, if necessary, by moving in small columns.

"The few war-ships are practically all in the hands of the Germans. In fact, the German garrison at

<sup>2</sup> These diaries I hope to publish at some future date.

Constantinople controls the place as absolutely as Junot controlled Lisbon when he occupied that city in 1808, but aid from the British outside would render the recapture of the place easy.

"1st October, 1918. It appears that the Salonica army is advancing on Sofia, and that the Bulgarians are retiring and are asking for peace. The Germans are said to be sending troops from Roumania, and the Austrians are sending troops into Serbia. Turkey has reinforced the lines of Tchataldja and Gallipoli by using up the first army, which leaves no one in reserve. Malinoff, who has made the demand for peace, remains at the head of affairs in Bulgaria—King Ferdinand has apparently nothing to say in the matter. The Anglo-Franco-Serbo-Greek army, called the 'Salonica Army,' I do not think reaches the total of 409,000, and I am told that there was no battle to speak of. The Bulgarian Army started a retreat, and Malinoff at once asked for an armistice, preliminary to peace. The French Commander-in-Chief, Franchet d'Espérey, naturally would not grant an armistice, but invited them to send responsible representatives, which was done. It all looks to me as if Bulgaria for some time past had determined to change over to the Entente."



## CHAPTER XX

### THE ARMISTICE WITH TURKEY

ON 3rd October, 1918, I went to Therapia from Prinkipo, in response to a telegram from the Egyptian Izzet Pacha, asking me to come and lunch with him at his villa. He met me at the Galata Bridge, at Pera, on my arrival from Prinkipo, with a motor-car, and we drove to Therapia, a most enjoyable trip. I soon learnt from him that the Bulgarians had made an armistice with the French Commander of the Salonica Army, and had engaged to remain with ordered arms till the end of the war, when Bulgaria's claims, interests, and fate would be decided by the Entente Powers. Their armies were to be demobilised, and guns and munitions were to be magazined in charge of British officers.

He told me that the excitement amongst the Turks at Constantinople was tremendous. It was felt that, in order to carry out their ambition and curry favour with the Entente, the Bulgars might attack the Turks and take Constantinople. There was also a strong rumour that the Turkish Government had resigned. I myself saw at Galata Bridge a Turkish battalion on the march to the famous Tchataldja lines, which cover Constantinople on the land side, and a large

number of troops had already left for there. There was every sign of movement and excitement, and we saw groups of German sanitation officers conversing in the streets. I was told by Izzet Pacha that it was said in influential quarters that I should now be sent by the Turkish Government to treat for peace with the British Government, and he had wanted to tell me at once. I told him, as we discussed the matter at lunch, that I should like nothing better, but should demand complete liberty as a condition of helping in the matter. I should hope to get a promise from the British of no annexation of Turkish territory in Europe or in Turkey in Asia proper; but the Turks must open the Dardanelles, and Constantinople would have to be a free port. The kingdom of the Hedjaz might be maintained on its own responsibility; Basra and Baghdad would have to be free ports with free trading and no restrictions, and there should be a British resident and guard in Baghdad. Otherwise, in my opinion, Turkey should be left alone.

There is no one to put in the place of the Turks. They should be left on our road to India, for they are too weak to do us harm. They have had enormous losses in the war; even greater than their losses in battle have been those from disease due to neglect of their food and pay by government.

There were at least 300,000 Turkish deserters in Asia Minor in September, 1918, who were the terror of the country. I know this from Turkish War Office sources for the Turks discussed these appalling

figures with me with perfect frankness. Raouf Bey, who was Minister of Marine when I left Constantinople on my mission to the British Fleet, assured me that there were not 20,000 Turkish troops in front of Allenby when the latter was approaching Aleppo. These 300,000 deserters were roaming the country as great bands of brigands of the type of the Spanish guerillas in the Peninsular War. They prevented all government and order, and even sacked towns and levied money from the local authorities. In September, the town of Panderma was held up by a considerable number of these men—deserters from the 5th army—and £60,000 in lira notes was burnt at the Municipal Hall, since the brigands regarded paper money as of no value. Some German officers were also stripped naked and severely beaten, whilst the Austrians were not touched. The brigands menaced Talaat Pacha, saying that if he did not make peace they would march on Constantinople and sack it. Such was the situation of Turkey in September, 1918.

As an example of the terrorism created by these brigands even in the environs of Constantinople, I may say that my aide-de-camp, Tewfik Bey, possessed a farm at a distance of ten or twelve miles from Skutari, and he was unable to send out to it and bring in wood for fuel. He could not send two or three naval orderlies alone, as they would have been shot on the way or made prisoners by the brigands. No party under a strength of twenty rifles could be sent

—and more often than not these parties fraternised with the brigands and joined their bands.

For the past two or three months I had let no opportunity pass of pointing out to Turks with whom I conversed—and they were many and influential—that their only hope of salvation was to make peace with England, and I knew that my conversations were repeated to the head of the party that was now plotting to overthrow Enver Pacha. They told me that he had offered his resignation to the Sultan about 15th September, and that it had been accepted, with the resignation of Talaat Pacha, who said he would go if Enver did.

I constantly pointed out to the Turks that the grouping of the German troops round Constantinople was so designed as to favour the dividing up of the city into sections, whilst the guns of the ships dominated the city. These officers talked to other Turks, and in the end my arguments had great results.

The Germans and Austrians were now endeavouring in every way to bring about peace by means of speeches by public men in their press propaganda. What a change in the German talk! It was all defensive, no longer that of the conqueror, and the “Gord ’elp us” speeches of the Kaiser were quite pathetic, leading one to suppose that he was a subject for prayers in churches. There was obviously a strong party in Germany opposed to the Kaiser, as he stood in the way of peace; Austria was prepared

to "rat," and I was convinced that she would do so on the first opportunity.

On 7th October I was told that Enver, Talaat, and the whole of the Cabinet had resigned, and Tewfik Pacha and Marshal Izzet Pacha had been sent for by the Sultan to form a new Ministry. The Turks still hoped that the Entente would grant an armistice to the Central Powers on the principles of President Wilson's Fourteen Points, but I argued that it was impossible for the Entente to grant an armistice on all fronts, merely to enable the Central Powers to get breath and dig themselves in. I laughed at the very idea. "It is impossible," I said, "for the British, French and American armies to grant an armistice to the Germans, unless the latter will evacuate French and Belgian territory. The only hope for Turkey is to copy Malinoff, by which course of action you will certainly get as good terms as Bulgaria. You should do this at once." This is the line I took with Tewfik Bey, who came across from Constantinople that evening to see me.

On 12th October, whilst in my garden at Prinkipo, I heard of the fall of the Enver-Talaat Ministry, and was informed that Marshal Izzet Pacha was to be Grand Vizier and War Minister in the new Cabinet. I at once sent Izzet Pacha a letter suggesting an interview, and saying that I thought there was no time for delay. I also sent word on 15th October, to Raouf Bey, the newly appointed Minister of Marine, whom I knew well, and as a friend, that I was willing to assist the Turkish Government to negotiate with



the British, in return for the honourable way in which I had been treated during my captivity. I flattered myself that they would have confidence in my ability to conduct such a mission, and would have equal confidence in the genuineness of my endeavour to obtain honourable terms for their country. If the Turkish Government thought well of my offer, not a moment should be lost in sending me to the British Fleet. But I required my personal liberty before I departed. This message went by the hand of Tewfik Bey, who was a great friend of Raouf Bey, the Minister of Marine, and had originally introduced him to me. The above facts will show that I had made good during my captivity with men who had now come into power on Enver's downfall.

If I brought about this armistice successfully, I told Tewfik Bey, there was no doubt whatever that Austria would also at once cast off the German tow-rope, and in this I was right. I knew Tewfik Bey would repeat this to Raouf Bey, the Minister of Marine.

On the evening of 16th October, Tewfik Bey returned from Constantinople with a message from Marshal Izzet Pacha, that he wished to see me at the Sublime Porte on the following day at 2.30 p. m.

Accordingly, I went to Constantinople with Tewfik Bey. I had jotted down in my pocket-book the conditions I proposed, whilst sitting in the cabin of the launch taking me across from Prinkipo to the Sublime Porte.

"Will Turkey accept?—

1. Opening of the Dardanelles and Bosphorus to British Fleet.
2. Autonomous rule in Mesopotamia and Syria under the Sovereignty of Sultan, like Bavaria, Saxony, Württemberg, etc., i.e., a Confederation of States.
3. Would the same apply to the Caucasus?
4. The troops of the Entente to evacuate Mesopotamia and Syria.
5. The frontiers of Turkey in Europe to remain as settled and defined in the Treaty of London.
6. Prisoners of war, British and Indian, to be released at once, assembled at Smyrna and sent to Chios by boat."

On arriving at the Sublime Porte, I was at once taken to Izzet Pacha, in the Grand Wazirat. The Field-Marshal is a man of about sixty-three years of age, strong and hale—known as a good tactician and manœuvrer in battle, a good general, and immensely popular in the army. He greeted me warmly and we talked alone. He said that he had been called on to take the helm at a time and in a situation which were none of his seeking, and for which he was not responsible. With tears in his eyes he said that he found his beloved country in a terrible condition.

We soon came to the point. He said, "Then you are willing to help us?"

I replied, "With all my heart."

He said that Raouf Bey had informed him of the contents of my letter. His one idea was to save his

country from ruin, because he came of a family that had always respected England and the English—he remembered what England had done for Turkey in the Crimea. It was a *crime*, he said, with emphasis, for Turkey to have made war on England, and he referred bitterly to the Enver party that had done so.

I spoke of my willingness to help Turkey, and he said he had every confidence in me and would send me at once. I was free, and he was glad to give me my liberty. He did not specify any conditions he desired for Turkey, but merely gave me to understand that he relied on my efforts to get honourable terms.

I said that the only way which I thought would make England agree at once was to open the Dardanelles. I was careful not to mention the question of the Gallipoli forts, which of course must be occupied by the Allies as well, for no Admiral could trust himself with a fleet in the Sea of Marmora if the Turks remained in occupation of the forts.

Izzet Pacha, who seemed very upset the whole time at the grave position his country was in, replied that the Turkish Government would be willing to open the Dardanelles, if England was ready to protect Turkey. He asked when I should be ready to start.

I replied that I was ready to start at once. I hoped he would send me right away that night, for there was not a moment to be lost, since the British Fleet was even then concentrated at Lemnos.

He was quite in accord with me; not a moment was to be lost.

I told him I hoped to reach England in seven days,

*viâ* the Dardanelles. He said he was not certain if he could send me by that route, as many German officers were there, and he did not want them to know. His predecessors had delivered the Turks into the hands of the Germans, and they were everywhere. He thought that *viâ* Smyrna would be the best way. I argued for the Dardanelles on the ground of rapidity, and because the British Mediterranean Fleet was there. If it were contemplating action in conjunction with the Anglo-Greek army, which I believed had crossed the Maritza (he did not contradict this), my arrival might delay matters. I said that such an attack would cause a crisis at Constantinople, and that was to be avoided at all costs.

He entirely agreed with me, and said he would consult with Raouf Bey and his other colleagues and see if they could not manage the Dardanelles route (he seemed impressed by what I said about the Fleet outside the Dardanelles).

I added that it appeared to me that the importance of my meeting the Fleet outweighed even the risk of the Germans finding out that a flag of truce had gone out—not to speak of the advantage in rapidity.

I asked him if it would not be best to wire the reply of the British Government to the Turkish Embassy in Switzerland to save time. He said it would, and gave me the address of the Military Attaché, Colonel Khalil Bey, whom he could trust, and who had already received his instructions in the matter.

He said he would send Raouf Bey, the Minister of Marine, and perhaps also the Minister of the Interior,

in a launch to Prinkipo to see me that night. He added, "You will start to-morrow at the latest."

He shook hands with me very warmly, and spoke of my defence of Kut, which he admired as much as Plevna, with which he compared it; and he said the soldier they honoured most in Turkey was Osman Pacha, the hero of Plevna, although—like Kut—that place had fallen.

The interview then ended. I was very touched by Izzet Pacha's kindness, his reception of me, and, above all, by his confidence in my efforts to help Turkey. I came out of the Sublime Porte free, and feeling a new man.

I went back to Prinkipo at 5 p.m., and as I watched the minarets of Constantinople sink astern I reflected how strangely I had been instrumental in accomplishing by diplomacy the object which I had been unable to accomplish when I was sent with my handful of men to take Baghdad.

Had I not cause to feel glad and proud? Izzet Pacha had agreed to open the Dardanelles. The Straits of Gallipoli, the Sea of Marmora, and the Bosphorus would be in our hands in a few days, and the 20,000 German troops at Constantinople would have to surrender or be removed by a convention. Turkey would be taken out of the war, and Austria also would in all probability make peace. I was now free—nor had I forgotten my gallant men in captivity, for I had stipulated for their freedom, which also Izzet Pacha had accorded.

At 10.30 p.m., Raouf Bey arrived at my house at



Prinkipo, and we had a conversation for about two hours, during which he stated Turkey's armistice conditions, which we discussed over our cigarettes and coffee.

- “1. Turkey wants to be friends with England and demands her protection.
2. England is to stop active operations at once.
3. The Turkish Government is ready to give autonomy to territories under the sovereignty of the Sultan occupied by the Allies; England is to defend this system of government.
4. Financial, political and industrial independence for Turkey.
5. Financial help, to tide over a crisis, if needed by Turkey.”

He informed me that the Germans were trying to foment civil war between the two political parties in Constantinople, and that then they would take action with a view to getting possession of the place with their troops and warships. They were mobilising the Black Sea Fleet, but the Turkish Government intended to take secret measures which would prevent it from passing through the Bosphorus, while military counter-measures were already prepared. Raouf's talk convinced me that the Turkish Government might at any time ask assistance of the British Fleet.

Raouf told me I was to pick up Rahmy Bey's steam yacht about 8 a.m. in the channel between Halki and Andigoni Islands the next morning. Rahmy Bey, the Governor of Smyrna, was charged

with conducting me there, and putting me on the island of Chios, where were British warships and a Greek garrison. A special train would take me from Panderma to Smyrna. Izzet Pacha desired me to wire from Chios to the British Government, giving a hint of the situation in Turkey, and he emphasised the fact that the Turks wanted to make peace with the British and desired British protection. Raouf asked me to report any progress to Chios. This would give confidence to the Turkish Government. He said that the plan of reporting to Colonel Khalil Bey in Switzerland would not do.

Raouf Bey also said that the British must not try to force the Dardanelles, for that would cause chaos in Constantinople. "God knows what will happen then. Turkey only wants to be friends with the British, and it is surely to England's interest to encourage this. The whole thing must be a *fait accompli* before it is talked about. If we want help, we will call on the British and open the Dardanelles. Leave us alone till then. In short, treat us like gentlemen, and we will be loyal."

As regarded the possibility of a financial crisis, Germany had lent Turkey about five hundred million pounds, paper. Thus Turkey's financial credit was based on Germany's, and, if Germany was beaten and her credit shattered, so was Turkey's. It would be a good investment for England, as she would have a first call on the money that Turkey had put aside to repay the German loan.

"Let England do things quietly and trust Turkey

as a gentleman; that is what Turkey will appreciate."

Raouf Bey told me that Aleppo had not yet fallen, but the English were drawing near, and they would march into the town without opposition. "We are not resisting," he said, "we haven't 20,000 men to resist Allenby's 80,000. Of our three armies—the 4th, 7th and 8th—the 7th and 8th are wiped out or taken, and only the wreck of the fourth army remains. There is desertion on a large scale, and in the recent fighting with the British in Syria, large numbers ran and wouldn't fight at all."

Raouf left me about 1 a. m. and went back to Constantinople in his launch, after a most friendly good-bye. He begged me to do my best for Turkey, reminding me that they had treated me well and honourably. We promised to meet again soon.

My feelings of excitement can be imagined as I walked back to my house, and realised how the servants were busy packing up for our departure in the morning.

"18th October. Accompanied by Captain Morland and Tewfik Bey, two British orderlies, my Indian servant Simon, and our baggage, I rowed off to the channel between Halki and Prinkipo. At noon, the yacht arrived with Rahmy Bey on board, and we steamed for the port of Panderma on the Sea of Marmora, where we arrived at 6 p. m. We left in the Governor of Smyrna's special train an hour later.

"19th October. Arrived at Smyrna at midday. The whole place turned out to see the Governor of Smyrna, with whom I was travelling. The streets of

the town were crowded, and there were acclamations and cheers as the Governor, with me at his side, and the English inhabitant here, Mr. Whittal, passed in the motor. I was astonished at this. Mr. Whittal told me that all Smyrna knew I was arriving, and that they knew it meant peace."

The Governor took me to lunch with Mr. Whittal's family at his house, some way out of the town in the "English Village." There were about twenty people at lunch. Not much secret about my leaving Turkey!

In the street I met Captain Munday, of the Oxford Light Infantry, who was at a prisoners' camp a few miles out of Smyrna, and Rahmy Bey permitted me to take him with me.

At 2 p. m. I was to start in a Turkish Government tug, but owing to delays about the baggage it was not until 3.30 that we got under way, proceeding down the Gulf of Smyrna, and shaping a course for Mitylene, where we expected to find a British warship. As I was not going to risk being stopped by the Germans, I insisted on trying to pass through the minefield at night, since there was a fine moon, and the sea was like a mill-pond. The Turkish naval officer in charge of the tug remonstrated, saying, "But, your Excellency, if we touch a mine and you are injured, I shall be tried by court martial." I replied that neither he nor I would know much about it afterwards if we did touch one, so we would take the risk. We passed through five lines of mines.

"20th October. At 3 a. m. we arrived at the har-

bour of Mitylene town, not having seen a vessel. After whistling twice, a motor-boat came off with a British naval officer, who hailed us: 'Who are you?'

"I called out: 'General Townshend.'

"'Good God! I am glad to see you, sir.'

"I was once more under the British Flag."

I wired to the Admiral Commanding the Fleet, asking him to send a fast vessel to take me to him; to Admiral Wemyss in London, to tell my wife I had been liberated and was on my way to London. I sent a similar telegram to the Secretary of the War Office, and, later, a long statement of Turkey's position and proposals to the Foreign Office.

"20th October (continued). Arrived at Mudros at 3 p. m. I went on board the Admiral's ship. Admiral the Hon. Sir Arthur Calthorpe, Commander-in-Chief in the Mediterranean, and Rear-Admiral Sir Michael Culme-Seymour gave me a hearty welcome. I had a telegram from the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, saying that I was to remain at Mudros until further orders, and that my presence must be kept as secret as possible."

I remained on the fleet as a guest of Admiral Seymour. The Turkish delegates arrived on 26th October, and were quartered on board the battleship *Agamemnon*, and the conference began on the following day.

The Turkish delegates were Raouf Bey, the Minister of Marine, Saad Ullah, a Colonel of the Turkish General Staff from Aleppo, and Rechard Hikmat Bey. Tewfik Bey, of the Turkish Navy, who, it will



be remembered, had been my naval aide-de-camp at Constantinople during my captivity, and had accompanied me to the fleet, came with them.

I cannot, of course, say what occurred at this conference. I was not asked to make one of it, but I remained with the fleet whilst the business proceeded in order to help if matters came to a deadlock.

My own ideas on the situation are shown in the following unofficial memorandum, drawn up for Mr. Montagu, the Secretary of State for India, on my return to England:—

“15th November, 1918.

“Dear Mr. Montagu:

“In discussing the question of Turkey at a Peace Conference, it should be understood that the majority of the respectable Turks have been for England throughout the war. That is an undeniable fact. The party of ‘Union and Progress,’ under the leadership of Enver and Talaat, who seized the power, was bought by German gold. The ‘Union and Progress’ party is utterly corrupt, and has done nothing during the war but attend to their own private fortunes from the financial point of view.

“Enver, Talaat & Co. ruled absolutely by *fear*. Anyone who opposed them disappeared at once, following the method of the Sultan, Abdul Hamid.

“It should also be remembered that the Turkish peasants and working population are an honest race, and should not be punished for the crimes committed by their Government.

“Bearing the above in mind, I should—had I a voice in the matter—treat Turkey on the following broad lines of Strategy and Politics, endeavouring to prevent the two from clashing; for otherwise, if Politics interfere with Strategy, all history is here to prove that disaster is the result in the majority of cases. At the same time, it should be borne in mind that Izzet Pacha, the Marshal, Grand Vizier and Minister of War, is, and always has been, friendly to England. In the interview when he gave me my liberty, he asked if I would help Turkey, and said that he came of a family that had always respected England, and that he remembered the Crimean War and the policy of Lord Beaconsfield. He said, in answer to my question whether he was ready to open the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus, that he was ready to do so; that he was ready to give autonomy to the occupied territories (Mesopotamia and Syria), but under the sovereignty of the Sultan, adding that we could take what guarantees we liked. All that Turkey wanted, he said, was the *protection* of England. He thought that it was better for England to have Turkey on her road to the East—Turkey, who would be a faithful and obedient ally—instead of some power which eventually would become a thorn in the side of England. ‘But,’ he said, ‘we could not accept dishonourable terms; we are not Bulgarians. We have ideas of honour, and rather than accept dishonourable terms, we will put our backs to the wall and fight. You know what the Turks can do when driven to it, for you have fought against

them. Do not drive us out of Constantinople or Turkey in Europe, where we have been settled for centuries, for this it is impossible for us to accept.'

"I must say that I agree with everything that the Marshal said, on broad principles. I can see no advantage in placing Bulgarians in Turkey in Europe; I can see no advantage in placing Greeks there, who would be kicked out in five minutes unless they had British bayonets to support them. It seems much more advantageous to me to keep the Turk on our road to the East.

"He is ready also, Raouf Bey, Minister of Marine, told me, to make Constantinople a free port; and, with that great commercial advantage, with access to the Black Sea, and the great strategical advantage of the Dardanelles, Gallipoli, and the Bosphorus in our hands, we have all Turkey at our feet. I see no advantage whatever in the occupation of towns in the interior of Turkey in Asia. On the contrary, I see a great strategical error, for it means dissemination—in other words, a violation of the greatest of the six fundamental principles of war, namely, Economy of Force.

"Following the same argument, I would certainly not occupy Macedonia or Syria, where we should only lock up troops for no purpose, especially when it is remembered that the possession of the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus puts Turkey in our hand.

"If it is considered by Government desirable to hold a portion of Mesopotamia, then I should retain the Province of Basra, which might be made a free

port; but, having the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean, I personally see no great necessity to hold Basra.

“The Turkish Government no doubt will want financial assistance. Raouf Bey informed me that they would try to do without it; but he said that, owing to the five hundred millions of Turkish *paper* loaned to Turkey by Germany, there will probably be a financial crisis. Of course, it requires an expert to deal with questions of finance, but from an outsider’s point of view it seems to me not a bad speculation, because we could take the first claim on Turkish repayment, tapping that money which they have set aside for paying off the German debt. Moreover, we should naturally take over all the railways and the commerce, establishing our merchants in Constantinople to trade, and so take back in many ways money we have advanced.

“As regards Armenia, I should treat this question, had I a voice in the matter, by placing a British Resident, on the lines of our diplomacy in India, to see that the people were not oppressed. I know well—and I may say no one better—all the horrors that have been perpetrated on the Armenian people, but it must be remembered that the Armenian question has been to the Turk what the Irish question has been to England. The Armenians, much as I sympathise with their wrongs, have invariably intrigued against the Turk, with the Russians and with the English, on every possible occasion. The Turk *au fond* is a bar-

barian and his methods of dealing with sedition are not as Louis XIV—like as our House of Commons.

"It is on these broad lines above indicated that I would treat the question of Turkey at a Peace Conference, had I any voice in the matter.

"Yours sincerely,

"CHARLES V. F. TOWNSHEND."

I had a conversation with Colonel Newcombe, R.E., on 27th October, at Mudros. He had been a prisoner of war in Turkey and had passed through many vicissitudes, being recaptured in an attempt to escape, and had finally got away. He told me that the day after I left Constantinople "secretly" my departure was announced in the press! Which shows that the Turkish Government itself had made it public, and accounts for my public reception at Smyrna. This dispensed with the necessity for my own government insisting on the fact that I had arrived at Mudros being kept secret.

On 29th October, the Conference was suspended for the Turkish delegates to refer the question of the occupation of the Gallipoli forts to the Sublime Porte. They had agreed to the opening of the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus.

On 30th October the armistice between Great Britain and her Allies and Turkey was signed at night on board the *Agamemnon*. At about 11 p. m., when on board the Admiral's yacht, the *Triad*, I received a message asking me to go on board the



*Agamemnon*, to see Raouf Bey. (The Conference had resumed its sitting at 9 p. m.) My impression was that some deadlock had occurred.

When I arrived on board the *Agamemnon* I found that the armistice had just been signed, and all the delegates, British and Turkish, were delighted. Raouf Bey nearly shook my hand off and said, "Turkey will never be able sufficiently to show her gratitude to you for having made peace possible, and we only ask you to visit Constantinople and to bring Lady Townshend with you." He then asked me to go to his cabin with him, as he had something to tell me in private. He then said he hoped I would see Lord Curzon and tell him that Turkey can be counted on as a faithful ally to England; that the Sultan had told him when leaving Constantinople that he *must* make peace with England. They hoped we should assist them financially—not a large sum, but sufficient to tide over a crisis, for Germany was sure to try to create financial difficulties for Turkey.

"We can be trusted," he said, "to give equal rights to Greeks and Armenians from all points of view, for Turkey cannot exist unless it remains *united*. I leave it to you to explain this to Lord Curzon, for you are well aware of the whole situation and the necessity of preventing all internal strife. Turkey has no intention of interfering in any way with the Arabs. They can have autonomy, but you know as well as I do that the Arabs are not capable of ruling themselves, and that this autonomy ought to be under the suzerainty of the Sultan."

After thanking him for all the kindness he had shown me in my captivity, I said good-bye to Raouf Bey, and he and the other Turkish delegates left on board a cruiser at 1 a. m.

The premature surrender of Turkey can be considered without any exaggeration as shortening the war by several months, saving millions of money and thousands of lives, to use the words of Monsieur Clemenceau, whom I saw in Paris. Such was the result on Austria and Germany of the sudden collapse of Turkey in October, 1918, for it must be remembered that the German Ambassador at Constantinople knew of my departure to make peace, for the Turks the very next morning had wired to Germany accordingly. The Turks could have gone on resisting Allenby fully four or five months, perhaps longer. But I am the last person to wish to minimise in any way the brilliant success of that great Commander, Edmund Allenby; I only want to make good my own humble share in bringing about peace.

## CHAPTER XXI

### CONCLUSION

**A**FTER thanking Admirals Calthorpe and Seymour for their great kindness and hospitality to me during my stay, I embarked the next night, 31st October, on H.M. Cruiser *Forward*, commanded by Captain Bedford, to reach Taranto *viâ* the Corinth canal *en route* for Rome and Paris, on my way to London. I arrived at Rome on 3rd November, at 11.30 a.m., and found that Austria—as I thought she would—had quickly followed Turkey's example, and asked for peace.

I reached Paris on 5th November. Here I was joined by my wife, and we stayed at the Hotel Meurice for three or four days and were greeted by a large number of friends.

I was honoured by an interview with Monsieur Clemenceau, who congratulated me warmly on my work, and especially on bringing Turkey out of the war, saving, as he put it, millions of money and thousands of lives. During my interview a telegram arrived for him which he showed to me; it was from the Germans, asking if they could pass through the allied outposts to arrange an armistice.

I was very anxious to see Marshal Foch, whom I had known before the war and with whom I had discussed at length the possibility and probable manœuvre of the German offensive in the event of war, as far back as 1911.

Historians and statesmen often ascribe to generals who have been successful as commanders in the field such endowments as "prescience," "intuitive divination of the enemy's designs and movements," and so forth. These gifts, in the preternatural extent implied, exist only in the imaginations of the chroniclers. In this direction I have read statements in the above sense in the press lately as regards certain British generals having divined the German manœuvre through Belgium in 1914. The following anecdote will therefore be of interest, as showing that I heard the manœuvre in question discussed in 1911.

I had returned from my command in South Africa on promotion to the rank of Major-General, and had gone to see General Foch in his study at the Ecole de Guerre. I was accompanied by Commandant Mordacq, who had just been appointed to the Staff of Joffre, the Generalissimo of the French armies—and when I knew him first he was one of the professors at the Ecole de Guerre under Foch. Mordacq is now a general and is Military Secretary to Monsieur Clemenceau. We had been friends in Paris at a time when I was studying the art of war very deeply, and we had often exchanged views in strategy; and Mordacq, who was a pupil of Foch, had honoured me by referring to my studies in strategy, and the

Napoleonic doctrine in particular, in his book *La Stratégie—Historique—Evolution*, published in 1912. This book had followed his famous *Etudes Stratégiques*, published in 1910, which I had recommended most strongly to the notice of Lord Nicholson and Lord French. I consider that it had a great share in winning the war, for Mordacq's writings have been largely studied, and in many ways adopted, by our own General Staff and by those of Italy and Spain, and, I think, of Bulgaria and Rumania also. In this direction I would refer also to his *Politique et Stratégie dans une Démocratie*, published in 1912. This has only to be read for it to be clear that it played a great rôle in the war.

At that talk in Foch's study at the Ecole de Guerre, he showed on the great map how the Germans would concentrate 42 to 45 army corps on the line Cologne-Mülhausen, some 240 miles of front! "That is not a war," said Foch. "It is a Teutonic invasion." He showed us how the right wing of the German armies would come through Belgium in a wide and sweeping turning movement. There is a reason, he said, why England must come into the war, for is it to be imagined that, once the Prussians get into Belgium, they will ever go out again, unless they are thrown out? He asked me, as a student of strategy, what my remedy was for such a vast extent of front as the line Cologne-Mülhausen. How would Napoleon have treated it? I replied that he would have treated it by Strategic Penetration, i. e., he would have thrown his Principal Mass either against the centre,



or one of the wings, since his favourite turning manœuvre against one of the enemy's flanks and rear was not possible in the case of such a vast extent of front. Foch quite agreed with my answer.

He discussed the three double lines of strategic railway which the Germans had constructed from Cologne and Coblenz to their strategic camp at Malmédy opposite Liège. This I immediately discussed in a letter to Field-Marshal Sir W. Nicholson, Chief of the Staff of the Army. It was dated 24th October, 1911, from the Château de Champs, and I propose to quote it here.

"I have had a long talk with Commandant Mordacq of the Ecole de Guerre, of whom I have often spoken to you. He has now been appointed to the Staff of General Joffre, the new Generalissimo in France. Mordacq came to see me at our house in the Rue Bassano, and we discussed the probable zone of operations of the French and German groups of armies in case of war.

"I told you previously of my talks with General Foch, the commandant of the Ecole de Guerre, last May when I was home on three months' leave from South Africa; he has now been appointed G.O.C. 13th Division, 20th army corps, with H.Q. at Chaumont. I look on Foch as the leading strategist in France, and am proud to call myself a pupil of his. You will remember, perhaps, my telling you of the three double-lines of railway the Germans have constructed from the line Cologne-Coblenz (the base of operations of the German strategic right wing) to

their strategic camp at Malmédy on the Belgian frontier opposite to and east of Liège; I told you that these three lines of railway were in a poorly populated country sparsely dotted with villages, and thus of no commercial value. They have most perfect detraining platforms and loops to reverse trains, and, in addition to large munitions of war, there are over two hundred motor-cars garaged at Malmédy Camp (evidently for a dash across the frontier to cut the line of railway along the Meuse). These railways are capable, the French say, of concentrating seven army corps in four days at Malmédy Camp.

"These facts, added to the one that the Germans have been actively fortifying the Alsace-Lorraine zone, certainly indicate that the Germans will use that zone as a secondary or defensive theatre with their minimum forces, and that a great turning movement with their Principal Mass must be expected in their principal or offensive theatre—Belgium and Luxembourg.

"Their best general would be in command of their Principal Mass. Turning movement to enter France *viâ* Namur and the Meuse. Such dispositions are in accordance with the Napoleonic principles on a vast scale (240 miles of front from Cologne to Mülhausen, on which they will concentrate 37 Army corps). General Foch was of the opinion that the barring of the Scheldt at Flushing was to ensure the alimentation question of the German strategic right wing in Belgium. That is a real Napoleonic type of decisive battle, where he aims at deciding the whole campaign

in one vast victory, according to his favourite system in strategy and tactics. It is the manœuvre against the enemy's flank and rear—what Napoleon often called the manœuvre *sur les derrières*. His great examples of this are the 1800, 1805, and 1806 (Jena) campaigns. . . .”

My letter then discusses the possible grouping of the allied armies to oppose this manœuvre of the Germans, but there is no space here to insert it in full. I have quoted sufficient to answer the claim as to prescience regarding the German turning movement through Belgium, which no doubt the general in question has not claimed himself.

As my letter quoted above was to Field-Marshal Nicholson, the Chief of the Imperial Staff of the Army, with whom I was well acquainted and accustomed to write on various strategical questions, no doubt it was read with interest, and if I remember rightly it was shortly after this date that Lord French and General Grierson visited the valley of the Meuse and Namur.

General Foch said to me in the course of the conversation on the occasion referred to: “There will be no war if England, France and Russia show their teeth, but they must be good teeth, and England's are not good; she will not make an army.”

It was natural that I should be very eager to see the great Marshal Foch, who had now proved himself the first leader in Europe; I had an appointment to see him on the afternoon of the same day as I saw Monsieur Clemenceau. But, in motoring out to the

château where his Headquarters were, I missed him, as he was suddenly called into Paris to see Monsieur Clemenceau, regarding the armistice with the Germans. I had to leave the next day, and so to my great regret I did not get a chance of seeing the Marshal.

I reached Victoria station on Saturday, 9th November, and had a warm welcome from a few of my friends and relations.

In my diary of 1911, I find the following two letters from General Foch to myself, which I think may prove of interest, and I also find under the date of 4th December:—"I had Generals de la Croix and Lyautey to lunch with me at 2 Rue Bassano. General de la Croix was Generalissimo last year in France, and, I know, enjoyed the entire confidence of the French General Staff. He has just had to retire for age. He impresses me as being a very able soldier with a deep knowledge of strategy and higher tactics. General Lyautey commands the army corps in Brittany, is supposed to be politically very ambitious, and, for French generals, is young-looking. During our conversation Lyautey was glad to hear of my enthusiasm for General Foch's abilities. He said, 'I am entirely of your opinion.'"

Lyautey, it will be remembered, was at one time Minister of War and is now Governor-General of French North Africa; and everyone knows the able military articles by De la Croix in the "Temps" during the war.

*Paris, le 22.8.1911.*

*Ecole Supérieure de Guerre.*

*Le Général Commandant.*

*Mon cher Général,*

*Je suis heureux de la bonne nouvelle que vous me donnez de votre promotion au grade de Général Major. Elle vous arrive dans de magnifiques conditions de carrière. Je vous en fais mes compliments bien sincères.*

*Je viens de mon côté d'être appelé au commandement de la 13e division, dans le 7e corps, qui est à notre frontière de l'Est. Je pars ce soir pour la diriger aux grandes manœuvres. Le commandement me plaît tout à fait. Chaumont, qui est mon quartier-général, n'est qu'à 4 heures de Paris. Je pense pouvoir y venir de temps à autre, surtout si je sais vous y rencontrer. Ce que vous me dites de vos manœuvres m'a beaucoup intéressé. Vos troupes sont en très bonne voie de progrès d'instruction.*

*Veillez, mon cher Général, recevoir l'assurance de mes meilleurs sentiments,*

*J. FOCH.*

*Chaumont, le 6.11.1911.*

*7e Corps d'Armée, 13e Division.*

*Le Général.*

*Mon cher Général,*

*Votre aimable invitation à déjeuner à Paris m'a trouvé à Chaumont, dans l'impossibilité d'y répondre. Ma dépêche n'a pu vous dire, comme je le désire, tous*



*mes regrets d'avoir manqué à votre rendez-vous. Votre lettre me fait espérer que vous viendrez bientôt en France. Je pense même que vous viendrez à Chaumont. Prévenez-moi un peu à l'avance. Je serai très heureux de vous y recevoir. Si vous y veniez, sans prévenir, vous risqueriez de me trouver absent. Ma division s'étend très loin. J'ai un régiment à Lons le Saulnier, 2 régiments à Besançon, indépendamment de deux autres régiments qui sont à Langres et à Chaumont. Nous faisons pendant l'hiver des manœuvres de garnison et des exercices de cadres. Je vais y assister de temps à autre; cela me fait voyager beaucoup.*

*Je regrette beaucoup que vous n'ayez pu assister à nos grandes manœuvres. Elles ont eu, je trouve, une belle allure. Nous étions tout à fait prêts pour faire la guerre. Nous aurions fort. On aurait vu ce qui en serait résulté l'accord franco-allemand est signé. Mais le calme complet règne-t-il pour cela en Europe? En Angleterre ne voit-on pas déjà de nouveaux orages? Que va-t-il se passer à Constantinople ou dans les Balkans? Le printemps ne ramènera-t-il pas de nouvelles questions à résoudre peut-être à coups de canon? Je vous vois appelé au commandement des forces anglaises en Egypte bientôt, mais avant cela, ne croyez-vous pas à de nouvelles difficultés européennes?*

*Je vous fait mes compliments pour vos belles chasses à Champs. Cette année avec le commandement nouveau de ma division que j'ai pris le 16 août et celui de l'Ecole de guerre que j'ai conservé en*

*même temps jusqu'au 15 octobre, je n'ai pu tirer un coup de fusil, à mon grand regret.*

*Adieu, mon cher Général, à bientôt je pense. Croyez à tous mes meilleurs sentiments.*

J. FOCH.

I have received hundreds of letters, from all conditions of people, showing sympathy and appreciation of my efforts. I quote that of Major-General Kemball, who was the Chief Staff Officer of Sir John Nixon, and afterwards, in command of a brigade, was engaged in the fighting to effect my relief at Kut.

“Flagstaff House, Mhow,

“Central India.

“22nd November, 1918.

“My dear Townshend,

“I was very glad to see in Reuter's that you had arrived safely at home, and had had a great reception in London.

“I hope that at the end of the war you will receive still higher recognition of your services, and that the gallant 6th Division may also be specially honoured.

“Nothing, however, can make up to you and them for your long and terrible captivity, and I can assure you that the fate of the gallant garrison of Kut was deeply felt by all.

“I also sympathise with you in having lost all further opportunity to show the great generalship you displayed until you were taken prisoner from no fault of your own. It was most unfortunate that

Nixon's health broke down when it did, for I felt sure he would have got you out. . . .

"However, the elements fought against us, and it was a difficult task under existing conditions. The troops were all right and fought most gallantly, in spite of very heavy losses, especially from machine-gun fire.

"Hoping that you are well.

"Believe me,

"Yours sincerely,

"G. KEMBALL."

On reaching home I read, of course, the Mesopotamian Inquiry report in book form, and I had the satisfaction of seeing that I had come out of it with flying colours.

I attach letters from Lord George Hamilton, who was the President of that Inquiry, which are a source of consolation to me.

"17 Montagu Street,

"Portman Square, W.I.

"18th November, 1918.

"Dear Sir Charles,

"I have been temporarily laid up with a slight attack of influenza, otherwise I should have given myself the pleasure of calling upon you. Allow me, however, to congratulate you heartily upon your safe return to England, also upon the appreciation shown by the public of your splendid work in Mesopotamia. As Chairman of the Mesopotamia Commission, I wish

to associate myself with that appreciation, and I was greatly pleased to read an account of an interview you had with some reporter in which the facts you state entirely tally with the Report of that Commission. I am afraid that the great bulk of the gallant garrison at Kut are no more, having died from privation or starvation.

"One fact was brought very prominently to the notice of the Commission, viz., that the splendid defence made at Kut so obliterated its ultimate surrender that our prestige gained rather than lost by the whole transaction.

"Wishing you many years of success and prosperity,

"Believe me,

"Yours very truly,

"GEORGE HAMILTON."

"17 Montagu Street,

"Portman Square, W.I.

"14th February, 1919.

"Dear Sir Charles,

"I was very glad to get your letter and I should be delighted to see you in a few days. Unfortunately just for the time being I am very busy, but, in the course of a few days, I will write to you again and fix up an appointment, as I should greatly enjoy a conversation with you.

"I am glad you read the report of the Mesopotamia Commission, because we only had indirect evidence upon which to report as regards yourself, but it was

perfectly clear to us that you had been the mainstay of the Expeditionary Force from the time you landed, that the advance to Baghdad was made against your better judgment, and that you did all that was humanly possible against overwhelming odds, both in the retirement from Ctesiphon and in the subsequent protracted defence of Kut. . . .

“Believe me,

“Yours very truly,

“GEORGE HAMILTON.”

I bring this book to an end with two further letters which I value especially—the first from the gallant Aylmer, who tried so bravely to relieve me at Kut, and the second from the Colonel-in-Chief of my old regiment, the Royal Fusiliers.

“British Empire Hotel,

“De Vere Gardens,

“London, W.8.

“8—11—18.

“My dear Townshend,

“I believe that you have arrived back in the old country, after your long exile, so I write to welcome you and to send you my heartiest greetings.

“My thoughts have often been with you, and I have sympathised deeply in what must have been your feelings in not being able to take part in the war and follow up your splendid beginning. I congratulate you on having been able at the end to put in your effort to bring about the end of the war with Turkey.



My own failure to relieve you all at Kut will always be to me the greatest source of regret, for I had so many friends there. I do not think that anything has cheered me up so much as the message I got from you and Melliss, when I was superseded.

“Yours very sincerely,

“E. G. AYLMER.”

“Craigs,

“Dumfries, N.B.

“18th November, 1918.

“Dear Townshend,

“On behalf of the Regiment I write to offer you our sincere congratulations on your return home after your long and very trying experiences; and also to express our admiration of your heroic services, and the hope that these may in due course be fully recognised.

“Trusting you are fit and well,

“Believe me,

“Yours sincerely,

“GEOFFREY BARTON.”



## APPENDIX TO PART IV

Head Quarters, 6th Division,  
December 16th, 1915.

### PLAN OF ACTION IN THE EVENT OF THE TURKS MAKING AN ASSAULT

(To be communicated to the troops.)

The general principles which have guided the G.O.C. Division in the distribution of the troops are similar to those which govern the distribution of a force which awaits attack and is enframed by other troops in a line of battle. The defence is distributed in depth in its position, with good covered communications behind it, for concealment and cover from fire are vitally important factors in defensive operations.

The troops are divided into two main portions, one known as the **GENERAL RESERVE**, to be held in readiness for the offensive on fitting opportunity, and the other portion **DEFENDS THE POSITION**.

The artillery is posted so as to command the enemy's lines of approach and their probable gun positions.

The infantry allotted to the defence of the position is divided into the firing line with supports and a local reserve.

When the position is extensive, as in this case, it is divided into sections, each of which has been assigned to a distinct unit.

Thus one Infantry Brigade holds the left section of the **MAIN LINE OF DEFENCE**, and one holds the right section. The **GENERAL RESERVE** of one Brigade has been placed in rear of that portion of the position which, from the general

situation and nature of the ground, offers the best line for the eventual advance.

In the event then of the enemy making an assault, the G.O.C. Division intends holding the MAIN LINE OF DEFENCE, i.e., the front line running from the fort along old line of Block-houses, and will reinforce this line by the General Reserve. THE MAIN LINE OF DEFENCE MUST BE HELD AT ALL COSTS. The enemy are only now some 10,000 men, of whom 1,500 are on the right bank of the river, he having lost very heavily on the night of 12th December; we have some 9,000 fighting men—thus it must be impressed on the troops that if we attack them in the open now we should beat them well, as we are much the better at open fighting, as we have now proved in many fights. Therefore the G.O.C. Division has no fear of the result if the Turks make an assault—let them try it. Only it is absolutely requisite that for him to be able to push up the troops of THE GENERAL RESERVE, GOOD WAYS OF COMMUNICATION MUST BE MADE AT ONCE and arranged so as they can be fired from. This is the most vitally important work of all, and all other work must now be ceased until these ways of approach are made.

C. V. F. TOWNSHEND,  
*Major-General,*  
*Commanding the Force at Kut.*<sup>1</sup>

#### GENERAL AYLMER'S APPRECIATION OF THE SITUATION ON 16TH DECEMBER, 1916

He estimated the enemy's forces, round me at Kut and

<sup>1</sup> It will be seen that I had exaggerated my own strength by a thousand men. I did this partly to encourage the rank and file, and partly on the principle that when one is induced to speak of one's own forces in *communiqués*, etc., which may find their way into the hands of the enemy, one should exaggerate one's numbers. I acted on the same principle in my battle orders to the troops for the Battles of Kut-al-Amara and Ctesiphon, in which I purposely minimised the numbers of the enemy, in order not to shake the confidence of my troops.

below Kut on the Tigris, at 17,000 men and 54 guns. The enemy's impending reinforcements might be the 5th Division, of 7,000 men and 9 guns, which might reach Kut by 1st January; it was possible that the Euphrates Division (26th Division), of 7,000 men and 24 guns, lately reported at Feluja, would put in an early appearance. These two divisions could arrive at Kut before any relief force.

The 36th and 37th Divisions, with 44 guns, might arrive at Kut between 20th and 27th January, i.e., before the whole Tigris Corps united under Aylmer could do so, but *after* a smaller relief force of one strong division could reach Kut.

"Very serious factors in the situation are the wastage of British officers and reported diminishing *moral* of Indian troops in Townshend's force; the arrival of the 5th Division and possibly the Euphrates Division on or before 1st January will bring great extra strain on him."

A Russian advance on Baghdad from Kermanshah direct, if the enemy is vigorously pushed, might draw away a part of the reinforcing divisions, but Aylmer did not rely on that. (Nor did I.)

"Taking the above factors into consideration I think it would be hazardous to rely on Townshend holding out till 15th January, and that it would be most advisable to anticipate that date and to attempt to relieve him by 10th January if possible. This would forestall two of the relieving divisions."

RELIEVING FORCE. General Aylmer estimated that the Meerut Division, Cavalry Brigade, and one extra infantry brigade, with some extra artillery, could be concentrated at Ali-al-Gharbi about 3rd January. The assembly of the 3rd (Lahore) and 7th (Meerut) Divisions, ready to advance together, would probably take three weeks longer. The total numbers of the *smaller* relieving force, assisted by my force at Kut, were estimated at 27,000 men, with 87 guns, about one-third of which would be inferior troops who



have suffered heavily. If Aylmer carried out the relief of Kut with the whole of the Tigris Corps united, he would have to reckon on an additional 16,000 Turks with 44 guns.

The above appreciation, he said, took no account of the Arabs, of whom 5,000 might be under arms. "Townshend's small-arm ammunition seems sufficient to last six weeks. Gun ammunition on the whole sufficient to last three to four weeks, but he is short of howitzer ammunition, which in such operations is a serious matter. He has now some 7,800 fit men using rifles; his net daily average loss of men firing rifles since investment began is approximately 75. At this rate his number of rifles will be reduced by 1,200 by 1st January and 2,400 by 15th January.

"It is, of course, infinitely preferable that the whole corps should advance to the relief together at one time, as our strength would probably carry us through to Baghdad without serious check after our successful battle.

"On the other hand, if relief of Kut is carried out by smaller relief force, i.e., only the Meerut Division, one extra brigade, and Cavalry Brigade, it will delay the arrival of the whole of the Tigris Corps owing to a large amount of transport accompanying relief force. We should be too weak to take Baghdad with the smaller relief force and would have to halt to await the delayed arrival of remainder of the Tigris Corps. The Turks would certainly re-form and oppose us again in a stronger position, or possibly assume the offensive. The essential point, however, is to ensure timely relief of Townshend, as any reverse to him would have most serious political effects, not only in this country, but in India."

General Aylmer summed up that he was strongly of the opinion that he should move forward from Ali-al-Gharbi to relieve me on 3rd January with the troops at present with him, i.e., Meerut Division, extra Infantry Brigade and Cavalry Brigade, even if this did delay the arrival at the front

of the larger force. He considered a strong division and cavalry brigade should be sufficient to relieve Kut.

#### COMMENTS ON THE ABOVE APPRECIATION.

The great fundamental principle of Economy of Force demanded that Aylmer should unite all his available forces in his hand before advancing; and to advance before uniting one's forces means violation of Economy of Force, which in history invariably means disaster or defeat. It is true that the business of a relief force is to raise a siege and not protract it, and Aylmer had shown that he decided to disregard the principle of Economy of Force for that very reason. It will be remembered that Kuropatkin protested at advancing from Harbin before he had united all his forces in his hand, when he would guarantee to sweep the Japanese from Manchuria, but the Minister of War overruled him and said that Port Arthur must be relieved at all costs. The result was naturally the disaster of Wafangon. Port Arthur, however, was a fortress of the greatest strength, with a garrison of 35,000 men, and so could look after itself; on the other hand, at Kut, I was in a wretched, flimsy, entrenched camp, with a shattered little force, the *moral* of the bulk of it shaken, and I feared the result of a determined assault on the part of the Turks. In addition I was not happy in my mind at the knowledge that entrenched camps in military history are bound up with the final surrender of the force which has sought shelter in this way; only the urgent strategical necessity of holding up the advance of the 6th Turkish Army until British reinforcements could arrive and unite for battle, had decided me to take the risk of entrenching a camp at Kut and being immediately invested. Naturally I was anxious for relief now that British forces were actually in Mesopotamia, and it was natural that I should keep asking for it. Although the advance of a part of our relief force before all of it was united was a

violation of Economy of Force, still the enemy were doing the same. The Turkish 6th Army had been pushed on Kut in packets. Thus it may well be argued that Aylmer was right to attempt to relieve me as soon as possible, given that the fall of my force would have a disastrous effect in India, and he was right in taking the most essential point, i.e., the immediate relief of my force, as the most important objective. However, it will be seen in a telegram to me on 1st January that he says that, though he would greatly prefer to make a start from Ali-al-Gharbi for my relief with one division on 3rd January, by far the best plan from the point of view of the relieving force would be to advance all together from Sheikh Saad as a combined corps. In my answer, on the same date, I not only agreed, but urged it on the grounds of Economy of Force.

*Secret.*

Head Quarters, 6th Division,  
December 29th, 1915.

#### CONFIDENTIAL SCHEME FOR WITHDRAWAL TO AND OCCUPATION OF MIDDLE LINE IF SUCH BECOMES NECESSARY

(This cancels No. 256-G, dated 22nd December, 1915—  
“Confidential Scheme for withdrawal to and  
occupation of 2nd Line.”)

Copies to Brigade Commanders and D.E.C. only. They should give confidential instructions to commanders of units—who should send representatives to identify the various billets and locations which they will occupy in case of withdrawal. The whole matter to be *kept absolutely secret*, there being no immediate intention of any such withdrawal. All details of this scheme to be worked out by G.O.C. General Reserve in communication with commanders of first-line troops.

TROOPS AVAILABLE. 1. The troops available for defence of main line are at present as follows:—

N.E. SECTION.	4 battalions; one Co. Sirmur Sappers; Maxim Gun Battery; Detachment Volunteer R.A.
N.W. SECTION.	4 battalions.
GENERAL RESERVE.	5 battalions.

NORMAL DISTRIBUTION BY DAY. 2. Normal distribution of above by day:—

N.E. SECTION.	3 battalions in Fort. 1 battalion in trenches. 3 picquets on river bank.
N.W. SECTION.	4 battalions in main line trenches.
GENERAL RESERVE.	5 battalions, <sup>2</sup> in bivouacs "A," "B," "C," "E," "F."
ADDITIONAL.	48th Pioneers in "D" bivouac, 17 and 22 Cos. Sappers and Miners.

BY NIGHT. N.E. and N.W. Section as above:—

GENERAL RESERVE.	(a) One battalion in close reserve at point "P."
	(b) One battalion after relief from firing line at "K" till dawn.
	(c) One battalion in close reserve at "H" till dawn.
	(d) Two battalions in bivouac. Additional to sleep in 2nd line trench or bivouac—48th Pioneers, 17th and 22nd Cos. S. & M.

<sup>2</sup> Less picquet of 50 men on west river bank.

3. Should withdrawal from the Fort be necessary (which is improbable) a new entrenchment, which is under construction, running from Redoubt "B" in an easterly direction to the river bank, will be held by the N.E. Section.

4. Before withdrawing from the Fort the new entrenchment will be occupied by one battalion from the General Reserve to cover withdrawal.

G.O.C. North-East Section will intimate his intention to withdraw to G.O.C. General Reserve, who will send up one battalion.

Having occupied the new entrenchment G.O.C. N.E. Section will release, as soon as possible, one battalion, to General Reserve.

This is assuming the battalion originally at "H," in close reserve, to have been absorbed.

The distribution on this line would then be:—

BY DAY.	NORTH EAST SECTION.	3 battns. in 1st line.
		1 battn. in reserve at Middle line.
	NORTH WEST SECTION.	As before.
BY NIGHT.	NORTH EAST SECTION.	As for day.
	NORTH WEST SECTION.	As in para. 2.

5. Should further withdrawal from main line and new entrenchment become necessary (which is unlikely) the MIDDLE LINE will be taken up and held.

6. Four small blunted *flèches*, with long flanks for about 50 rifles each, to block approaches and force enemy to commence sapping earlier, should be quickly put in hand at distances 100 to 200 yards in front of middle line.

This will be carried out by G.O.C. General Reserve in communication with D.E.C.

7. The Middle line is divided into N.E. Section from river bank on East to point about 800 yards westward, i.e.,



to reserve trenches at end of reserve communication trench exclusive; N.W. Section from this point to river on West. Middle line is about 1,900 yards in extent.

8. Before withdrawal from Main line, including new entrenchment, it will be necessary to hold Middle line. Assuming that the close reserves are engaged, a battalion from General Reserve will hold the N.E. Section of Middle line to cover withdrawal.

One battalion from General Reserve will hold N.W. Section Middle line.

G.O.C.'s N.E. and N.W. Sections will, if they can, tell G.O.C. General Reserve to which part of Middle line they wish these battalions sent. Otherwise they will normally hold the fire at intervals, leaving communication trenches clear.

9. On withdrawal and as circumstances permit, G.O.C. N.E. Section will send two battalions through to 2nd line.

G.O.C. North West Section will send three battalions through to 2nd line.

These battalions will come under orders of G.O.C. General Reserve for distribution in second line or bivouacs as circumstances permit.

G.O.C.'s Sections and General Reserve will in communication arrange details of movement of battalions from one line to the other.

## ORDERS FOR MOVE OUT OF KUT IN SUPPORT OF RELIEF FORCE

To G.S.O.,

My dispositions in case I move out to co-operate with General Aylmer's force on its arrival on the left bank near the Fort are to be indicated to all G.O.C.'s Brigades as follows:—

### (1) ON THE APPROACH OF GENERAL AYLMER'S FORCE.

The Brigade then on duty as General Reserve will be

moved by my order into covered position south of the Fort, in support of the 17th Brigade.

(2) THE 18TH BRIGADE under Brigadier-General Hamilton will move into the Middle Line and become the GENERAL RESERVE, leaving 1 battalion to look after Kut, withdrawing 1 battalion from Liquorice Village on right bank for this purpose.

MY BATTLE FORMATION WOULD THEN BE:—

PRINCIPAL MASS on the right—

Brigade formerly in General Reserve leading.

17th Brigade in support.

Add 48th Pioneers and 1 Field Battery.

MINIMUM FORCE, comprising 1 brigade already installed in N.W. Section and Sappers and Miners, 2 field batteries and the Howitzer Battery, to move along the left bank of the Tigris when ordered to advance. The GENERAL RESERVE will be at the disposal of G.O.C. Division at his orders—Divisional Hd. Qrs. with General Reserve.

On principle, I shall move the PRINCIPAL MASS at effective field-artillery range, 2,500 yards or  $1\frac{1}{4}$  miles on the right (north) of the Minimum Force.

If the progress of one of these two Columns is seriously resisted, the other column will assist its progress by at once commencing an envelopment against the hostile body opposing its neighbour's advance.

I shall move the GENERAL RESERVE behind the gap between the two columns but nearer the Principal Mass than the Minimum Force.

*Note.*—The Norfolks to rejoin 18th Brigade.

Kut.

C. V. F. T.,  
20/Jan./16.

PROJECTS FOR CO-OPERATION WITH GENERAL  
AYLMER'S FORCE, DRAWN UP BY ME IN  
MY OPERATION ORDER BOOK

A. FOR ATTACKING THE TURKISH MAIN CAMP ON LEFT BANK, west of Kut. I should attack in 2 Columns:—

“A” Column on the right=PRINCIPAL MASS AND OFFENSIVE  
WING OF MANŒUVRE.

“B” Column on the left=MINIMUM FORCE.  
moving along bank of  
river.

“A” COLUMN = 2 Brigades,  
add 48th viz., 17th Infantry Brigade (leaves half  
Pioneers and battalion in Fort) and the brigade  
17th Battn. which happens to be in General Reserve  
in second-line trenches when this action  
comes to pass. All Machine-guns bri-  
gaded to go with “A” Column.

“B” COLUMN. Consists of that brigade which happens to  
Add Sappers be in the “Middle line trenches” at time  
and Miners. this action comes to pass.

THE BULK OF ARTILLERY able to be taken with us will  
be with “B” Column (2 Field Batteries).

THE GENERAL RESERVE will be 18th Brigade under Gen-  
eral Hamilton, which will move into the second-line trenches.  
One Battalion must be left in KUT to guard Hospitals and  
magazines and S. and T. supplies, 1 Battalion being with-  
drawn from KUT for that purpose.

General Reserve at disposal of G.O.C. Division.

On principle I should move “A” Column at effective field-  
artillery range, i.e., 2,500 yards, or  $1\frac{1}{4}$  miles on right of  
Column “B.”

If the progress of one of these two columns is seriously

resisted, the other column will assist the progress of its neighbour by commencing an envelopment against the hostile body opposing its advance.

GENERAL STAFF to work out details in accordance with Scheme "A."

#### SCHEME "B."

PROJECT FOR CO-OPERATION WITH GENERAL AYLMER'S FORCE BY ATTACKING THE TURKISH FORCE NOW AT HANNAH ON LEFT BANK WHEN IT RETIRES PAST US TO TURKISH MAIN CAMP ON LEFT BANK. This movement in retreat must be carried out if General Aylmer is successful in his right bank manœuvre.

In this case also there would be two columns.

COLUMN "B." = Minimum Force. 17th Infantry Brigade.  
     add Sappers      (Would leave half battalion to hold  
     and Miners      fort.)  
     and 17th Batt.

COLUMN "A." = Principal Mass. That Brigade which is  
     add 48th      in General Reserve at time action hap-  
     Pioneers and      pens, and 2 Battalions of 18th Brigade  
     1 Field'Battn.      under General Hamilton.

18TH BRIGADE LEAVES 1 battalion in KUT town,  
                                     1 battalion in Liquorice Village.

"B" Column would debouch from fort by its N.E. exit and move along river bank.

"A" Column would debouch by "A" redoubt to west of Fort and move about 1 mile north of Column "B" acting the part of the offensive wing of manœuvre.

*Note.*—The battalion on duty in N.W. Section trenches will demonstrate to the north in order to assist the debouch of "A" Column west of Fort.

GENERAL STAFF to work out details of above scheme.

**"C" SCHEME FOR CROSSING 6TH DIVISION TO RIGHT BANK AND MEASURES FOR COVERING THIS MOVEMENT.**

The movement includes guns, sick and wounded, ammunition and supplies—after all these are put across—the troops in Middle Line and Fort will evacuate these defences, retiring in echelon, the 17th Brigade and Fort garrison retiring first to middle line and then the brigade in the N.W. Section to 2nd Line, followed by 17th Brigade to 2nd Line. The BRIGADE OF N.W. SECTION then retires through the Brigade in General Reserve in Second Line, *via* Brick Kilns and crosses bridge; followed by 17TH BRIGADE by shortest way to bridge, guns covering this movement from right bank opposite the middle line.

The Brigade in General Reserve in 2nd Line would then retire in echelons of battalions from the left (West) and cross bridge. THE 18TH BRIGADE would remain throughout the operation holding North West exterior wall of Kut town, Brick Kilns, and Cemetery Redoubt; thus forming the REAR GUARD. General Hamilton, at my signal, will then commence his retirement, from Brick Kilns, then the town, lastly Cemetery, crossing bridge to right bank.

GENERAL STAFF to work out details of passage of river for guns, sick, wounded, ammunition, and supplies in accordance with Scheme "D."

*Note.*—Sappers and Miners working on bridges and rafts and 48th Pioneers working with guns under C.R.A.

**SCHEME TO CO-OPERATE WITH GENERAL AYLMER'S FORCE TO CROSS THE HAI.**

I. I should reinforce the garrison of the LIQUORICE VILLAGE (i.e., 2 battalions and 1 double Cos. the Rajputs) with rest of General Hamilton's brigade, and THEN ADD THAT BRIGADE WHICH HAPPENS TO BE IN GENERAL RESERVE IN SECOND LINE TRENCHES (this brigade would leave 1 battalion in the town) by means of ferry at night, in, say, 3 nights.



The artillery in their positions on left bank would support the action of the two brigades when at daybreak they capture the nearest trenches, and set to work to take the trenches west and south of the village, while a portion of the guns will be switched on to the enemy's gun emplacements on right bank above Liquorice Village, i.e., N.W. of the Village.

The fact of this attack should enable the Relieving Force to cross the HAI.

II. Should General Aylmer after this operation decide to attack the enemy's main camp at SHUMRAN bend on right bank of river, I should cross the 17TH BRIGADE to the Liquorice Village. Thus I shall have 3 brigades of the Division and move frontally along the bank against enemy's camp above-mentioned; mine would form the Minimum Force or Frontal attack, whilst General Aylmer's force would be the Principal Mass or wing of manœuvre, operating south-west of me, with the idea of turning or enveloping the enemy's camp from the south-west.

But I am convinced that, if General Aylmer's success is a good one, the enemy will retreat entirely up river, as far certainly as Azizieh.

GENERAL STAFF to work out details of crossing troops to Liquorice Village in accordance with above idea, Scheme "D."

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#### G.S.O., I.

I issue a 6th Division operation order secretly to G.O.C.'s Brigades (4) and O.C.R.A., O.C. 10th Brigade, R.F.A., D.E.C., O.C. Signal Service, A.Q.M.G., A.O.T., and A.D.M.S. to prepare to carry out PROJECT B issued by me with the intention of attacking the enemy if he retires from Hannah on left bank.

The G.O.C.'s of the 30th, 18th and 17th Brigades will be prepared to march to the places of rendezvous given in

my instructions on my order by 7 a.m. to-morrow if I give the order.

Information contained in Corps Commander's 13/318/G. of 21st February is to be imparted by giving the above in a separate secret memo. The Corps Commander has arranged to deliver a surprise attack on the enemy's position at Hanaah to-morrow, 22nd February, at dawn—in which his whole force will take part.

If the enemy is driven out from his position, the G.O.C. Division will attack the enemy in co-operation with General Aylmer.

G.O.C. N.W. SECTION is to have his attention drawn to instructions concerning his demonstration in the event of G.O.C. Division moving out to attack the enemy.

C. V. F. T.,  
21/Feb./16.

Evening 22/Feb./16 ordered a state of modified readiness for troops, i.e., troops not to leave bivouacs or billets for any long period, all minor arrangements to be made by orders of G.O.C.'s Brigades.

C. V. F. T.,  
22/Feb./16.

PROJECT "E" FOR CROSSING THE TIGRIS TO THE RIGHT BANK  
AND CO-OPERATING WITH GENERAL AYLMEER IN THE  
BATTLE.

G.S.O., I.

Please draw up this project in a similar way to Project "C" (the Evacuation of Kut to the right bank) on the following lines:—

I should take command of the MAXIMUM FORCE, consistent with the ensuring the security of Kut, and cross river with it to the right bank as soon as the Relieving Force puts in an appearance.

Leaving a MINIMUM FORCE, consistent with the ensuring the security of Kut to hold the Kut defences, Town and Liquorice Village on right bank.

Maximum Force=Two weak brigades and 63rd Batt. R.F.A., less 1 section.

A. COLUMN.

THE PROVISIONAL BRIGADE = Norfolks.

Commanded by	Oxfords.
Colonel Evans.	22nd Punjabis.
	66th Punjabis.

B. COLUMN.

The brigade which happens to be in General Reserve at the time.

MEDICAL DETACHMENT and a proportion of A.T. carts for wounded, i.e., Minimum proportion.

The men to carry 150 rounds, 1 day's cooked food and great-coats.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO PROJECT "E"

I have said that the

MINIMUM FORCE left to hold the Kut defences will be under the command of the G.O.C. Brigade in the N.W. Section—and will comprise Brigade in N.W. Section.

17th Brigade (less 1 British and 1 Indian battalion).

18th Brigade (less 1 British battalion).

All the Divisional Artillery (less 4 guns of 63rd Battery, R.F.A.).

It would appear to be a very large Minimum, but below that I do not consider the safety of Kut would be ensured, in view of possible heavy counter-stroke by Turks on left bank against the defences of our far too extended frontage. Nor could I as regards the sortie in force cross a greater Maximum to the other bank of the river in anything like reasonable time, in view of my means for crossing—two flying bridges, the *Sumana*, and one barge. The

flying-bridges, I am given to understand, will take nearly 5 hours to fix up which is slow to a maddening degree, and the two, my D.E.C. says, could not cross more than 150 men an hour. The *Sumana* and barge I suppose can put across about 400 men per hour.

In order to force the passage of a river, the principle is that the Minimum Force demonstrates in order to make the enemy believe it is attempting to force a passage by making a pretended frontal attack, whilst the Principal Mass, constituting the offensive wing of manœuvre, crosses at another locality well to the flank of the minimum force, i.e., by a turning manœuvre.

On this principle I purpose to demonstrate with the garrison of the Liquorice Village whilst the crossing of the Tigris to the right bank is undertaken by Columns "A" and "B" of the sortie force in the bend of the river due east of town of Kut, i.e., where it is best sheltered and concealed from the hostile gun-fire.

I do not intend to make the crossing at night, because I am not absolutely certain of the arrival of the Relieving Force. It might rain near Sannaiyat and yet be fine at Kut, and I do not think the relieving force would advance on a wet day. In such a case my sortie in force on the right bank would be heavily attacked, a general attack would in such a case undoubtedly be delivered on Kut from all sides, and the sortie manœuvre would end, if not in a grave disaster, certainly with grave loss.

This is not an occasion where I should risk the fruit of our defence in night hazards and chances, and I shall therefore not commence the crossing operations with the sortie force until the relieving force appears on the scene. Besides, to cross at night would give the Turks absolute indication of some movement by the relieving force. I do not expect serious opposition to my troops, ferrying across in packets, installing themselves in the trenches on the opposite bank already made by the Turks, and pushing out to the

main line of Turkish trench (an old water-cut, I believe, east of the river bank). After the first column has crossed the river I should next cross all the sappers and pioneers, and roughly shape the trenches on right bank into a bridgehead shape if I do not decide to push forward at once. The S. and M. and Pioneers would be followed by the remaining Column of the Sortie Force.

As soon as my Sortie Force stands collected on the right bank I shall act as circumstances demand; my idea being to join or co-operate with the enveloping attack of General Aylmer around the extreme right (or southern) flank of Essinn position.

ONCE THE RELIEVING FORCE IS INSTALLED IN THE ESSINN POSITION KUT IS AUTOMATICALLY RELIEVED—and if the Turks are badly defeated they will retreat, probably in disorder, and try to cross the Hai Bridge, which, I take it, will be menaced by the bulk of our Cavalry and H.A. guns.

C. V. F. T.,  
M.G.

2nd March, 1916,  
Kut-al-Amara.

#### FORT TO BE HELD AT ALL COST

G.S.O., I.

Please inform GENERAL OFFICERS COMMANDING BRIGADES that in view of our having to co-operate with General Aylmer's force on right bank and in view of the fact that if he installs himself at ESSINN POSITION on right bank, we are AUTOMATICALLY relieved, i.e., we can get across by the right bank to reach him at Essinn if it becomes necessary to abandon Kut. I have decided that the Fort must be held at all costs on the Hougomont principle.

It is obvious that if the G.O.C. left in command at Kut when I cross the river with the Sortie force, vacates the Fort on the ground—and with every reason—that his force is too weak to hold such an extended line as we are forced



by circumstances to hold at present, the enemy will at once occupy the Fort and interfere seriously with all operations for joining hands with General Aylmer. In addition, this would make the Brick Kilns impossible for our guns and cause great loss in the Town, etc.

You will now make all arrangements to put provisions into the Fort, and I will fix on strength of garrison in installation with Colonel Brown, who will command it.

Previous general instructions issued by me on subject of defence and occupation of Fort to be modified accordingly.

C. V. F. T.,  
3/March/16.

#### EXTRACTS FROM MY OPERATION ORDER BOOK CONTINUED:—

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS, to General Officers Commanding Brigades, dated 5th March, 1916.

I wish to explain to the G.O.C. Brigades on the eve of General Aylmer's push to relieve Kut that I have drawn up these plans, or rather projects of operations, to meet as many contingencies as I can think of, as it is impossible to say what the enemy may do, and also to meet General Aylmer's wishes as far as I can.

It is quite possible that the enemy may attack the N.W. or N.E. Sections of the Kut defences on the appearance of General Aylmer's force to the south-east, in order to contain or pin me to Kut and prevent my crossing to the right bank to co-operate with the Relief Force. These attacks might be decisive ones pushed well home, or, more probably, will be containing attacks by a Minimum Force, which will only be made serious on success being signalled in their principal field of battle.

The Turkish force at Hannah, also, might possibly retire from that locality and join in an attack on the Fort and N.E. Section of our defences.

Thus it will be observed that, in order to deal with circumstances and their demands, and being on the defensive-

offensive, I have arranged so as to draw a most powerful General Reserve or Principal Mass into my hand in the south-eastern outskirts of the town, comprising two Brigades, which are in reality in a CENTRAL POSITION ready for me to launch in either desired direction where my two Minimum Forces are installed across the enemy's two avenues of approach, viz., General Delamain across the N.W. avenue of approach, and General Hoghton across the N.E. approach.

By rapidly uniting my Principal Mass with either one of those two Minimum Forces engaged in containing the enemy, I shall most certainly roll back or crush or defeat any attack of the enemy which might be pressing back either of the two Minimum Forces mentioned above.

If the enemy does not attack the N.W. or N.E. sections, my preparations for crossing the river to actively assist General Aylmer will go on.

It will be seen I have concentrated my artillery as much as possible to obtain eastern and south-eastern zones of fire, in accordance with General Aylmer's request to me, but, should my defence be seriously attacked from N.W. and N.E., I have arranged with C.R.A. that the guns be quickly drawn through the town and installed for N.W. and N.E. fire sweep.

C. V. F. TOWNSHEND,  
*Major-General.*

Kut,  
5th March, 1916.

#### APPRECIATION OF THE SITUATION AT KUT-AL-AMARA, MARCH 15TH, 1916

(a) THE ENEMY'S MAIN FORCE OR PRINCIPAL MASS on the LEFT bank of the Tigris entrenched at Hannah and echeloned back in support of that position, save 2 divisions (51st and 52nd Regiments and 12th Regiment) and a detachment of 2 regiments, total combatants about 14,000 and 27 guns.

(b) A MINIMUM FORCE on the right bank of the Tigris in what is called the "Essinn position," one and two-thirds divisions, about 8,000 combatants, with 19 guns, the 35th Division being very weak.

(c) THE TURKISH CONTAINING FORCE OR FORCE OF OBSERVATION is at Shumran on the left bank, with a part of it on the right bank, a bridge connecting the two positions. It consists of the 45th Division, plus 3 battalions and 23 guns, roughly 7,000 or 8,000 men. Total number of combatants, say, 29,000 or 30,000 men and some 69 guns at least.

The connection between A and B is by rafts only at Magasis, but we may add to the above total some stray battalions we hear of in intelligence reports, and say 30,000 men at most under the command of Khalil Pacha.

The enemy suffered heavy loss on 8th March, but I do not know to what extent; the aide-de-camp of Khalil Pacha, who brought the letter, told one of my officers that the losses on both sides were about equal.

(2) I was led to believe that three more divisions were to have arrived to reinforce the enemy from Baghdad, where Von der Goltz has his centre of operations, directing the Turkish forces in Irak and Persia on a central position (or on interior lines) against the British on the Tigris, and a Russian force under Baratoff in the western (Persian) theatre of operations, which is also operating against Baghdad on the line Kermanshah, Tak-i-gerrah Pass.

KHANIEN. I do not know what is the strength of Von der Goltz's minimum force, on the line containing Baratoff's advance, but I should say a couple of divisions, and that Baratoff has a column of about 15,000 men only as he has small columns detached on various missions in Persia. Baratoff signs himself "Commanding Russian Expeditionary Corps in Persia." It is possible that, in order to reinforce the Turkish minimum force retiring before Baratoff, the three Turkish divisions mentioned above, which were to have

come to Kut, have been diverted by Von der Goltz to Khani-kin, and that the fall of Erzroum has diverted all the Turkish reinforcements which had been destined to form a central mass under Von der Goltz and greatly upset his plans. Baratoff has several times telegraphed to me, since his arrival at Hamadan onward to Kermanshah, to tell me of his progress and expressing hope of meeting soon in Mesopotamia. From the fact of the Russians being disseminated in small columns wandering about Persia I cannot believe they seriously intend a determined advance on Baghdad, as in that case they would have united all these small columns into a Principal Mass.

(3) I do not know the exact strength of the corps under Gorringe at Wadi, but according to telegram from G.H.Q. on 25th January, 1916, I must reckon Aylmer had some 20,000 combatants when he was making his attempt to relieve me on 8th March by making a push on the right bank. His losses in that action I do not know, but Khalil Pacha in his letter to me said Aylmer had lost 4,000 killed and wounded. Aylmer said his "losses were heavy," so I accept the 4,000 estimated, and, when the 13th British Division joins Gorringe (I suppose only some 12,000 strong), he will have some 28,000 combatants and 70 to 80 guns. I do not know the strength of the 13th Division, but as I know they lost heavily in the Gallipoli Peninsula, I suppose it is only some 12,000 strong.

(4) Had I the direction for the relief operations for Kut, I should on principle (after the failure on 8th March) deliver a decisive battle on the left bank with all my force united for the following reasons:—

I. The enemy's main force is on the left bank, and on principle therefore should be our principal objective; if this force at Hannah is destroyed and followed up, the Turkish force on the right bank will collapse also and retreat towards the Hai, as happened in the action I delivered last September, and Kut will be relieved.

II. I should feint, however, with a column on the right bank at dusk, so as to make the enemy reinforce his force on the right bank. I should then withdraw that column under cover of darkness across to the left bank again by means of my bridge, and by a night march deliver a wide turning move with my Maximum Force to the northward against the enemy's left flank and rear.

III. I should leave only a minimum force, in the shape of a mixed detachment of 2 or 3 battalions and a battery, on the right bank, to guard my bridge-head on that bank.

IV. In order to pin the enemy down in part on the left bank, I should use one bridge extended and made to look as large as possible, and give it the bulk of my artillery so as to make it strong. Thus my turning attack, composed of the greatest maximum force possible, would be directed against the enemy's flank, as in fact I did in the Battle of Kut last September.

V. If the relieving force operates on the left bank, I am in a position to co-operate when it draws near Kut, i.e., I can attack the trenches in front of my N.E. Section of defence and drive the containing force back.

VI. If the relieving force, on the contrary, approaches me on the right bank, I can only cross the Tigris on flying-bridges with great difficulty and slowness, putting me practically out of the fight. I should be lucky to get 2,000 men across in four hours with the means available and under fire.

VII. Another great advantage of the left-bank operations to Gorringe would be that his ships can advance as he does, thus facilitating supply of ammunition, food, and evacuation of wounded.

(5) On the right bank, on the contrary, he has to leave all ships behind at a great distance and has great difficulties over water, food and evacuation of wounded, for he has little transport. These difficulties, I believe, caused Aylmer to retreat when he might have continued and succeeded.

(6) Not being on the spot, I do not know if Gorringe



would have difficulty in delivering a turning attack with his maximum force on the left bank against the left flank of the enemy's position. But if he can do it, and follow it up with a string of reserves, it would be, I feel certain, successful, and a brigade could easily hold in check that portion of the enemy installed at Suwada Marsh, some ten miles or so back west from the enemy's position at that place, where I turned them last September.

(7) The enemy's containing force at Shumran<sup>3</sup> as on 8th March, will not do much, for, if they advance to reinforce along the left bank, they must pass me, and I should attack.

(8) The enemy's force at Essinn on the right bank is too far extended for decisive action. They hold an enormously extended line of some 11 miles at least, including the entrenchments south of the Dujailah Redoubt towards the Hai River, and they are busy digging there now. This is, of course, tempting, as they are holding with 8,000 men what two army corps would hold in Europe, and so are very weak everywhere; but I believe difficulties over water and evacuation of wounded put the Essinn manœuvre out of the question.

(9) Gorringe being on the spot of course will weigh the pros and cons for either bank. I can only speak on principle from where I am. I think Baratoff should be asked to make a vigorous offensive some days before Gorringe's advance, so as to get the Turks here looking over their shoulders towards Baghdad. I expect he will meet resistance in the Tak-i-Gerra Pass, but that can be turned, like all mountain passes.

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<sup>3</sup> The force containing and besieging Kut.

# APPENDIX TO PART FOUR 337

## SIXTH DIVISION

STATEMENT OF EFFECTIVE STRENGTH OF FIGHTING UNITS ON  
4TH DECEMBER, 1915

Detail.	Officers.		Rank and File.	
	British.	Indian.	British.	Indian.
H.Q. 6th Division .....	15	—	35	6
H.Q. 16th Inf. Bde. ....	3	—	9	6
2nd Dorset Regt. ....	12	—	315	—
66th Punjabis .....	3	8	—	488
104th Rifles .....	2	7	—	322
117th Mahrattas .....	5	8	—	393
H.Q. 17th Inf. Bde. ....	2	—	10	6
1st Oxf. & Bucks L.I. ....	8	—	332	—
22nd Punjabis .....	7	5	—	395
103rd M.L.I. ....	5	17	—	529
119th Infantry .....	5	12	—	470
H.Q. 18th Inf. Bde. ....	3	—	8	6
2nd Norfolk Regt. ....	7	—	234	—
7th Rajputs .....	6	5	—	357
110th Inf. ....	4	7	—	330
120th Infantry .....	7	10	—	445
2nd R.W. Kent Regt. ....	6	—	267	—
1/4 Hants .....	10	—	163	—
24th Punjabis .....	8	11	—	484
67th Punjabis .....	8	10	—	332
76th Punjabis .....	9	13	—	333
2/7th Gurkhas .....	6	8	—	502
B.G.R.A. and Staff .....	3	—	5	2
H.Q. 10th Bde. R.F.A. ....	2	—	11	—
63rd Battery, R.F.A. ....	2	—	133	26
76th Battery, R.F.A. ....	2	—	124	26
82nd Battery, R.F.A. ....	3	—	132	27
1/5 Hants How. Batt. ....	3	—	110	55
Divl. Ammunition Column .....	3	2	48	27
H.Q. Heavy Art. Bde. ....	2	—	4	—
86th (H) Bty., R.G.A. ....	4	—	56	—
104th (H) Bty., R.G.A. ....	3	—	37	54
Maxim Battery .....	2	—	11	26
No. 11 M.A. Bde. ....	1	—	—	—
H.Q. D.E.C. ....	1	—	—	—
17th Coy., 3rd S. & M. ....	2	3	2	166
22nd Coy., 3rd S. & M. ....	3	—	—	171
Bridge Train .....	1	—	—	29
Searchlight Section .....	1	—	—	11
34th Divl. Sig. Coy. ....	4	1	54	87
48th Pioneers .....	7	7	—	358
23rd (Divl.) Cavalry .....	2	1	—	70
6th Cavalry Bde. H.Q. ....	5	—	1	1

# 338 APPENDIX TO PART FOUR

Detail.	Officers.		Rank and File.	
	British.	Indian.	British.	Indian.
"S" Battery, R.H.A. ....	3	—	94	32
14th Hussars .....	20	—	397	—
7th Lancers .....	8	12	—	319
16th Cavalry .....	7	10	—	209
33rd .....	9	11	—	252
Cav. Bde. Ammun. Col. ....	1	—	7	19
Cav. Bde. Signal Troop .....	1	—	4	10
Total .....	246	168	2,603	7,381
Grand Total .....	10,398			

## SUMMARY

Cavalry .....	1,505	Sent away 6th December.
Artillery .....	946	
Sappers and Miners.....	390	
Signal Service .....	146	
Infantry .....	7,411	
	10,398	
Deduct .....	1,505	Sent away 6th December.
	8,893	

## SIXTH DIVISION

BI-WEEKLY STATE SHOWING EFFECTIVE STRENGTH OF FIGHTING UNITS ON  
15TH MARCH, 1916

Units.	Officers.		Rank and File.	
	British.	Indian.	British.	Indian.
H.Q. 6th Division .....	15	—	37	—
H.Q. 16th Inf. Bde. ....	3	—	11	—
2nd Dorset Regt. ....	9	—	332	—
66th Punjabis .....	5	15	—	424
104th Rifles .....	5	7	—	251
117th Mahrattas .....	5	14	—	324
H.Q. 17th Inf. Bde. ....	2	—	11	7
1st Oxf. and Bucks L.I. ....	7	—	303	—
22nd Punjabis .....	7	9	—	306
103rd M.L.I. ....	5	17	—	298
119th Infantry .....	5	15	—	352
H.Q. 18th Inf. Bde. ....	3	—	7	—
2nd Norfolk Regt. ....	7	—	303	—
7th Rajputs .....	5	6	—	315
110th M.L.I. ....	5	11	—	266
120th Infantry .....	5	12	—	337

Units.	Officers.		Rank and File.	
	British.	Indian.	British.	Indian.
H.Q. 30th Inf. Bde. ....	3	—	1	—
2nd R.W. Kent Regt. ....	6	—	270	—
1/4 Hants Regt. ....	7	—	152	—
24th Punjabis ....	5	12	—	430
67th Punjabis ....	3	9	—	261
76th Punjabis ....	6	15	—	347
2/7th Gurkhas ....	5	14	—	409
48th Pioneers ....	6	8	—	344
H.Q., D.E.C. ....	5	—	3	2
17th Coy. S. & M. ....	3	2	2	143
22nd Coy. S. & M. ....	2	2	1	153
Sirmur Sappers ....	1	4	—	66
Bridging Train ....	1	1	—	25
Searchlight Section ....	1	—	10	—
30th Divl. Sig. Coy. ....	5	2	48	95
30th Bde. Sig. Section ....	1	—	10	12
23rd (Divl.) Cavalry ....	1	2	—	85
Cavalry Depot ....	—	5	18	144
H.Q., C.R.A. ....	2	—	7	3
H.Q., 10th Bde., R.F.A. ....	1	—	13	—
63rd Battery, R.F.A. ....	3	—	86	36
76th Battery, R.F.A. ....	4	—	92	31
82nd Battery, R.F.A. ....	3	—	82	27
6th Ammun. Column ....	3	1	45	105
1/5th Hants How. Battery ....	2	—	92	54
H.Q. (H) Bde., R.G.A. ....	1	—	4	—
86th H.B., R.G.A. ....	4	—	70	14
104th H.B., R.G.A. ....	3	—	40	59
Vol. Artillery Battery ....	3	—	39	—
No. 1 I.M.A. Bde. ....	1	—	—	4
Maxim Battery ....	1	—	8	19
R.A. Details, employed under 17th Bde. ....	2	—	91	—
Army Corps Sig. Coy. ....	—	1	24	11
Royal Flying Corps ....	3	—	41	11
Total .....	190	184	2,253	5,770
Grand Total .....	8,397			

SUMMARY

Cavalry .....	235
Artillery .....	962
Infantry .....	6,396
Sappers and Miners .....	427
Signal Service .....	173
R.A. details and Miscellaneous Units.....	184
	8,397.

STATEMENT SHOWING CASUALTIES BY UNITS IN KUT-AL-AMARA BETWEEN 4TH DECEMBER, 1915, AND 31ST MARCH, 1916, INCLUDING DEATHS FROM DISEASE

Unit.	British Officers.				Indian Officers.				Rank and File.				Followers.				Total
	K.	D. of W.	W.	M.	D. of D.	K.	D. of W.	W.	M.	D. of D.	K.	D. of W.	W.	M.	D. of D.		
D.H.Q. ....	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	
16th Bde. ....	—	—	—	—	—	19	13	40	—	5	—	—	—	—	—	1	
Dorset .....	2	1	2	—	1	27	12	56	2	26	35	1	1	—	—	85	
66th Puni. ....	—	—	—	—	—	19	19	75	—	24	7	1	6	—	—	129	
104th Rifles ..	—	—	1	—	1	18	17	89	5	5	1	1	3	—	—	155	
117th Mah. ....	1	—	—	—	—	17	14	52	1	24	7	1	3	—	—	163	
Oxford. ....	1	1	3	—	—	17	10	89	—	5	1	1	3	—	—	100	
22nd Pun. ....	—	—	—	—	—	17	14	43	10	8	3	1	—	—	—	109	
103rd M.L.I. ....	—	—	4	—	—	47	40	136	3	71	2	3	4	—	—	312	
119th Inf. ....	1	—	2	—	1	35	22	110	—	42	1	1	—	—	—	222	
18th Bde. ....	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	
Norfolk. ....	—	—	1	—	—	8	9	46	—	9	1	1	3	—	—	80	
7th Reg. ....	—	—	—	—	—	11	9	45	—	29	29	4	5	—	—	103	
110th Inf. ....	—	—	—	—	—	15	27	78	2	35	2	—	1	—	—	104	
120th Inf. ....	1	—	1	—	1	30	29	58	1	35	—	—	—	—	—	143	
W. Kent. ....	—	—	—	—	—	9	13	54	—	1	—	—	2	—	—	79	
Hants. ....	—	—	3	—	—	6	15	24	—	—	—	—	3	—	—	49	
24th Pun. ....	—	—	—	—	—	15	10	89	2	11	15	1	3	—	—	133	
67th Pun. ....	—	—	—	—	—	15	16	65	—	11	16	1	3	—	—	139	
76th Pun. ....	—	—	—	—	—	82	17	90	2	16	2	1	—	—	—	171	
27th Gur. ....	—	1	1	—	—	28	17	74	—	12	1	—	—	—	—	132	
48th Pioneers. ....	—	—	—	—	—	17	22	83	—	16	—	—	2	—	—	150	
D.C.'s H.Q. ....	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	2	
17th S. & M. ....	—	—	—	—	—	4	1	18	—	9	—	—	—	—	—	39	
22nd S. & M. ....	1	—	1	—	—	9	2	26	—	6	—	—	2	—	—	46	
Sir Sapp. ....	—	—	—	—	—	3	9	9	—	5	—	—	1	—	—	31	



Unit.	British Officers.					Indian Officers.					Rank and File.					Followers.					Total.
	K.	D. of W.	W.	M.	D. of D.	K.	D. of W.	W.	M.	D. of D.	K.	D. of W.	W.	M.	D. of D.	D.	W.	M.	D. of D.		
23rd Cav. ....	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	3	5	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	11
Cav. Depot ...	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	7	11	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	25
C.R.A. ....	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	5
10th Bde. ....	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2
63rd Bty. ....	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	29
76th Bty. ....	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	44
82nd Bty. ....	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	25
Ann. Col. ....	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	20
Hants Bty. ....	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	31
Heavy Bde. ....	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
86th Bty. ....	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	23
104th Bty. ....	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	25
M.A. Bde. ....	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
23rd M. Bty....	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2
Vol. Bty. ....	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Maxim Bty....	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2
34th S. Coy....	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	16
30th Bde. S.S..	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	43
A.C. Sig. Coy..	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	26
R.F.C. ....	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3
Chaplains .....	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	9
Medl. Estab....	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	5
Supply Estab....	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	116
Trans. Estab....	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3
R.I.M. ....	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	177
Total .....	8	9	44	1	2	7	6	19	1	3	427	370	1510	43	454	63	72	259	3	87	3388

NOTE: Total British Officers, 64; Indian Officers, 36; Rank and File, 2,804; Followers, 484; Grand Total, 3,388.

# 342 APPENDIX TO PART FOUR

## SUMMARIES OF EFFECTIVES AT KUT-AL-AMARA AT VARIOUS DATES THROUGHOUT THE SIEGE

	Cavalry	Artillery	Sappers and Miners	Signal Service	Infantry	Miscellaneous and R. A. Details	Total
4th December, 1915...	1,505	946	390	146	7,411	—	8,893
23rd January, 1916...	207	1,048	464	171	6,430	36	8,356
7th February, "...	207	942	453	176	6,530	197	8,505
21st February, "...	231	943	439	177	6,566	196	8,552
8th March, "...	255	945	426	174	6,444	188	8,432
15th March, "...	255	962	427	173	6,396	184	8,397
20th March, "...	258	961	428	172	6,404	187	8,410
3rd April, "...	261	953	434	172	6,376	188	8,384
19th April, "...	258	935	436	177	6,168	187	8,161

## SUMMARIES OF CASUALTIES AT KUT-AL-AMARA DURING SIEGE

*From 4th December, 1915, to 29th February, 1916, to 31st March, 1916*

Killed .....	455	504
Died of wounds .....	391	454
Wounded .....	1,608	1,836
Missing or deserted..	80	48
Died of disease.....	443	546
Total deaths .....	1,289	1,504

## SUMMARY

	K.	D. of W.	W.	M.	D. of D.	Total
British Officers ....	8	9	44	1	2	64
Indian Officers ....	6	7	19	1	3	36
British Ranks.....	84	103	343	2	36	568
Indian Ranks .....	343	263	1,171	41	418	2,236
Followers .....	63	72	259	3	87	484

## SMALL ARMS AMMUNITION AT KUT-AL-AMARA DURING THE SIEGE

4th December, 1915.....	822 rounds for 7,250 rifles.
28th January, 1916.....	740 " " " "
21st February, ".....	735 " " " "
15th March, ".....	731 " " " "

# APPENDIX TO PART FOUR 343

## STATEMENT OF AMMUNITION IN MAGAZINES AT KUT-AL-AMARA ON 4TH DECEMBER, 1915

No.	Guns.	No. of Rounds.	Rounds Per Gun.
19	18-pounder Shrapnel.....	11,200	590
2	13-pounder Shrapnel.....	3,540	590
4	5-inch Guns Shrapnel.....	860	215
	“ “ Lyddite .....	832	208
4	5-inch Howitzers Shrapnel.....	314	78
	“ “ Lyddite .....	947	236
2	4-inch Guns Shrapnel.....	460	230
	“ “ Lyddite .....	521	260

## STATEMENTS OF AMMUNITION IN MAGAZINES AT KUT-AL-AMARA

Guns.	On 28th January, 1916.	On 23rd March, 1916.
18-pounder Shrapnel .....	7,206	6,252
13-pounder Shrapnel .....	939	781
5-inch Shrapnel .....	539	452
5-inch Lyddite .....	463	349
4-inch Shrapnel .....	131	138
4-inch Lyddite .....	407	105
*15-pounder Shrapnel .....	424	377
4.7-inch Shrapnel .....	210	189
4.7-inch C-pointed .....	692	595
4.7-inch Lyddite .....	324	268

} Naval  
guns.

\* Two guns used as Post defence guns.







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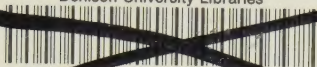
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